the weekly
Standard

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FEMINISM AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
DAVID GELERNTER

OBAMA!
The Man and the Myth

DEAN BARNETT • LIONEL CHETWYND
JOHN J. DIIULIO JR. • MATT LABASH
JONATHAN V. LAST

SPECIAL NO-SWOONING ISSUE!

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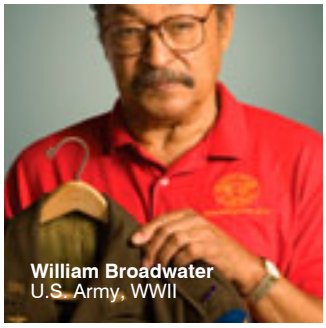
They fought for us. Now we need to fight for them.

Kimi Novak
U.S. Army, Korea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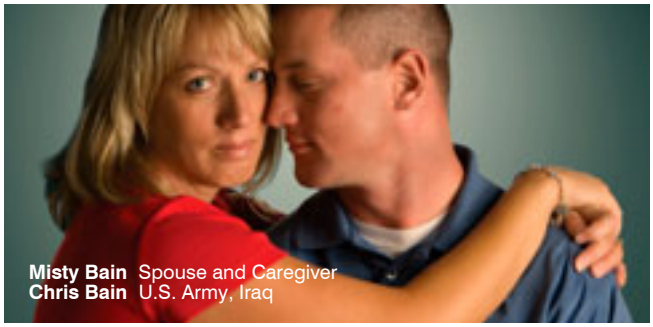
Misty Bain Spouse and Caregiver
Chris Bain U.S. Army, Iraq

Greg Williams
U.S. Army, Iraq

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The men and women who bear the physical and mental scars of war shouldn't have to fight to get the health care they need.

Congress needs to pass new legislation that will:

- Ensure that all veterans are screened and treated for psychological wounds, including PTSD;
- Improve diagnosis and treatment for traumatic brain injuries (TBI) suffered by so many combat veterans;
- Support family caregivers who have sacrificed so much to care for our disabled veterans;
- Reform veterans health care funding to guarantee that it is sufficient, timely and predictable.

Our veterans kept their promise. We must keep ours.

Join us at www.StandUp4Vets.org.

Tell Congress to provide our veterans the medical care and support they need and deserve.

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Education and Economic Growth

In a series of studies conducted over several years, we explored the role of both school attainment and cognitive skills in economic growth. We assessed how human capital relates to differences in economic growth for 50 countries from 1960 to 2000. We also paid attention to institutional factors that influence economic growth, such as openness of the economy and protection of property rights. What we discovered gives credence to the concerns expressed in ***A Nation at Risk***. The level of cognitive skills of a nation's students has a large effect on its subsequent economic growth rate. Increased levels of schooling attained by the labor force boost the economy only when increased levels of school attainment also boost cognitive skills. In other words, it is not enough simply to spend more time in school; something has to be learned there.

—Eric Hanushek, Dean Jamison, Eliot Jamison, and Ludger Woessmann

The Politics of Charter School Enrollment

Today, more than 1.2 million U.S. schoolchildren attend more than 4,000 public charter schools. But the success of the charter school movement has been as uneven as it has been widespread. There are remarkable differences in the number of charter schools and enrollment between states and even between school districts within the same state. This patchwork pattern of success raised two big questions in our minds. What factors led some states to grant charter schools a great deal of latitude and provide solid financial support, whereas others adopted less permissive legislation? And why, even among states with similar enabling legislation, do charter schools flourish in some places but not in others?

—Christiana Stoddard and Sean Corcoran

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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Dear Member of Congress,

Today's mortgage crisis is affecting our nation's economy and threatening the American family. Hundreds of thousands of homeowners are facing mortgage payments that are going up — possibly beyond what they can afford.

The financial services industry is committed to helping these homeowners through initiatives like the HOPE NOW Alliance, which has already helped 869,000 homeowners establish plans or new terms to bring them current and save their home.

Not everyone is acting in the best interest of America's homeowners though.

Some are advocating that Congress pass legislation to promote bankruptcy as a solution to foreclosure, and they are doing so without even attempting to describe the long-term negative consequences of bankruptcy to consumers.

Bankruptcy is a last resort to solving one's financial problems.

It puts a ten-year black mark on one's credit — credit needed in the future to purchase automobiles, credit cards, insurance and even homes. And let's not forget that many potential employers do credit checks before hiring.

Right now, there are better proposals before Congress, like FHA modernization, that would open additional avenues for the industry to partner with government to help homeowners.

And Congress has passed tax relief and increased the ability of the GSEs and FHA to do greater work in high-cost areas.

These proposals need to be given time to work.

Overreacting with legislation that can harm consumers will not solve the problem any faster.

And the lasting effects will be much more damaging to the economy.

American Bankers Association
American Financial Services Association
Consumers Bankers Association
Financial Services Roundtable
Housing Policy Council
Independent Community Bankers of America
Mortgage Bankers Association
Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association
United States Chamber of Commerce

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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The Castro News Network

The mainstream media's soft spot for Fidel Castro was a constant feature of his thuggish half-century in power. So it was altogether fitting that when the Cuban dictator announced his departure last week, CNN was caught stage-managing their on-air "talent" lest something overly critical be said about the Communist kingpin. The following memo from a producer at the cable network is reproduced verbatim:

From: Flexner, Allison
Sent: Tuesday, February 19, 2008 7:46 AM
To: CNN Superdesk (TBS)
Cc: Neill, Morgan; Darlington, Shasta
Subject: Castro guidance

Some points on Castro – for adding to our anchor reads/reporting:

* Please say in our reporting that Castro stepped down in a letter he wrote to Granma (the communist party daily), as opposed to in a letter attributed to Fidel Castro. We have no reason to doubt he wrote his resignation letter, he has penned numerous articles over the past year and a half.

* Please note Fidel did bring social reforms to Cuba—namely free education and universal health care, and racial integration—in addition to being criticized for oppressing human rights and freedom of speech.

* Also the Cuban government blames a lot of Cuba's economic problems on the US embargo, and while that has caused some difficulties, (far less so than the collapse of the Soviet Union) the bulk of Cuba's economic problems are due to Cuba's failed economic polices. Some analysts would say the US embargo was a benefit to Castro politically—something to blame problems on, by what the Cubans call "the imperialist," meddling in their affairs.

* While despised by some, he is seen as a revolutionary hero, especially with leftists in Latin America, for standing up to the United States.

Any questions, please call the international desk.

Allison

It's worth repeating—happily, we won't have many more occasions to do so—that these clichéd claims for Fidel's vaunted "social reforms" were hooey. Nicholas Eberstadt's excellent 1988 book *The Poverty of Communism* is careful and devastating in its deconstruction of Castro's supposed contributions to lowering Cuba's literacy and infant mortality rates. An excerpt: "According to Cuba's own life tables, infant mortality fell by about 32 percent between 1960 and 1974. Over roughly that same period, according to their life tables, infant mortality fell 40 percent in Panama, 46 percent in Puerto Rico, 47 percent in Chile, 47 percent in Barbados, and 55 percent in Costa Rica. If [the] National Academy of Sciences reconstructions are correct, infant mortality in Cuba would have fallen by only 25 percent between 1960 and 1978. If [these] estimates are reliable, the revolutionary Cuban experience would represent not the most rapid, but instead virtually the slowest, measured rate of progress against infant mortality in Latin America and the Caribbean for that period."

It's also worth repeating, because sadly it never goes without saying, that the mortality rate for Cuban critics of the departed "social reformer" was alarmingly and unnaturally elevated. ♦

The New Canterbury Tales

Finally, something good has come from Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams's ill-considered suggestion that multiculti Britain someday formally recognize *sharia*. It has provoked the blogger known as "Iowahawk" to lampoon the churchman while paying homage to Chaucer, with the "Tale of the Asse-Hatte." A sample:

21 Heere was a hooly manne of peace
22 Withe bearyd of snow and wyld brows of fleece
23 Whilhom stoode athwart the Bush crusades
24 Withe peace march papier-mache paraydes.
25 Sayeth the pilgryms to Bishop Rowan,
26 "Father, we do not like howe thynges are goin'.
27 You know we are as Lefte as thee,
28 But of layte have beyn chaunced to see
29 From Edinburgh to London-towne
30 The Musslemans in burnoose gowne
31 Who beat theyr ownselfs with theyr knyves
32 Than goon home and beat theyr wyves
33 And slaye theyr daughtyrs in honour killlynge
34 Howe do we stoppe the bloode fromme spillynge?"
35 The Bishop sipped upon hys tea
36 And sayed, "an open mind must we
37 Keep, for know thee well the Mussel-man
38 Has hys own laws for hys own clan
39 So question not hys Muslim reason
40 And presaerve ye well social cohesion."
41 Sayth the libertine, "'tis well and goode
42 But sharia goes now where nae it should;

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(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of August 14, 2000)

43 I liketh bigge buttes and I cannot lye,
44 You othere faelows can't denye,
45 But the council closed my wenching pub,
46 To please the Imams, aye thaere's the rub."
47 Sayeth the Bishop, strokynge his chin,
48 "To the Mosque-man, sexe is sinne
49 So as to staye in his goode-graces
50 Cover well thy wenches' faces
51 And abstain ye Chavs from ribaldry
52 Welcome him to our communitie."
53 "But Father Williams," sayed the Gaye-manne
54 "Though I am but a layman
55 The Mussleman youthes hath smyte me so
56 Whan on streets I saunter wyth my beau."
57 Sayed the Bishop in a curt replye
58 "I am as toolrant as anye oothere guy,
59 But if Mussleman law sayes no packynge fudge,
60 Really nowe, who are we to judge?" . . .

The Scrapbook heartily recommends that you take the soonest opportunity to read the entire work—as well as Iowahawk's many other fine parodies—at iowahawk.typepad.com. ♦

Saint Barack (cont.)

'Waiting to hear what Obama has to say—win, lose or tie—has become the most anticipated event of any given primary night. The man's use of pronouns (never *I*), of inspirational language and of poetic meter—'WE are the CHANGE that we SEEK'—is unprecedented in recent memory. Yes, Ronald Reagan could give great set-piece speeches on grand occasions, and so could John F. Kennedy, but Obama's ability to toss one off, different each week, is simply breathtaking. His New Hampshire concession speech, with the refrain 'Yes, We Can,' was turned into a brilliant music video featuring an array of young, hip, talented and beautiful celebrities. The video, stark in black-and-white, raised an existential question for Democrats: How can you not be moved by this? How can you vote against the future?" (Joe Klein, "Inspiration vs. Substance," *Time*, February 7, 2008.) ♦

Breindel Awards

Applications are being accepted for the tenth annual Eric Breindel Award for Excellence in Journalism. The $20,000 prize is named for long-time *New York Post* editor and columnist (and Weekly Standard contributor) Eric Breindel, who died in 1998. It is presented to the columnist, editorialist, or reporter whose work best reflects the spirit of Breindel's too-short career: love of country, concern for the preservation and integrity of democratic institutions, and resistance to the evils of totalitarianism. Submissions are also welcome for the third annual $10,000 collegiate award for the undergraduate whose journalistic work best reflects the themes that animated Breindel's writing. Contact Germaine Febles at 212-843-8031 or gfebles@rubenstein.com, or go online to www.ericbreindel.org. ♦

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Casual

Keep Despair Alive

Some people think cults are creepy. But as a child in the seventies, I rather enjoyed them. Whether Jonestowners, the Children of God, or the Symbionese Liberation Army, I always waited for the inevitable plot twist, when whatever had attracted the crazy cultists to each other in the first place—the organic vegetables, the neo-Maoist teaching, the group sex—would devolve into the inevitable Kool-Aid suicide/abduction/bank heist debacle. I came to consider these welcome entertainments. Back then, we didn't have cable.

Many are now charging that there is a new creepy cult leader on the loose, Barack Obama. On the strength of what? Well, a lot actually. Perhaps it's that he refers to his supporters—Obamabots, Baracktards, Obamaphiliacs, whatever we're supposed to call them—as "believers." Perhaps it's that other creepy cult leaders, like Oprah Winfrey, have taken up their crosses and followed him.

His legions of moonie-eyed idolaters do have a knack for embarrassing themselves, and the rest of us. They wait in line for hours to pack agriplexes in the Midwest, acting like squealing tweens whose parents have dropped them off at a Hannah Montana concert. They clap when he blows his nose. They shoot celebrity-studded music videos, whose lyrics are direct lifts from Obama speeches. They sing his gauzy nostrums—*Yes we can!*—as though the words carried the weight of scripture, when they really sound less like a coherent political philosophy than something Jenny Craig affinity-groupers would chant before the weekly weigh-in.

Obama inspires people to say embarrassing things, such as actress Halle Berry's statement, "I'll do whatever he says to do. I'll collect paper cups off the ground to make his pathway clear." He causes video vixens, like Obama Girl, to writhe around in Obama panties, cooing lyrics like *You're into border security / Let's break this border between you and me.* Sometimes, the sex isn't even subtext, as when MSNBC's Chris Matthews said after hearing an Obama speech, "My, I felt this thrill going up my leg. I mean I don't have that too often."

DARREN GYGI

Obama's name has now achieved such ubiquity, it has caused the online magazine *Slate* to start its own Encyclopedia Baracktannica, minting new Barackisms like "Barackturne" ("a sleepy, elegant song consisting of Barack Obama's voice accompanied by strings") and "Baracklea" ("a spiral-shaped cavity in the internal ear that registers only Barack Obama's voice"). Personally, I'm now suffering from Obamaversion (avoiding people who endlessly make cutesy plays off Obama's name).

As if the Barackcess (think excess) hadn't gone far enough, now comes "Barackula"—a 10-minute vampire musical in which a young Harvard Law School-attending Obama routs the undead, pulling off snappy dance numbers while singing lines like *will be fine I'll be back to normal / keep runnin' cause those suckers won't make me immortal.* I believe the vampires are supposed to represent the special interests, politics as usual, and the Clintons. I'm no Pauline Kael, but I get symbolism.

While the inevitable Baracklash (think backlash) is now in full effect, even among fickle media supporters, I'd like to be among the first to fuel the backlash against the backlash. I'm no Baracktard, though I do like the guy. He has excellent posture, a Colgate smile, and in his trim black suits always looks like he's off to some place cooler than a political rally, like to sit in with Cannonball Adderley.

I don't carry Chris Matthews-like reservoirs of affection. If Obama and I were at the drive-in, I'd probably stop him short of second base, letting him snap my bra through my poodle sweater before I pushed him away so as not to ruin our friendship. But I wouldn't make him pay for my popcorn. We'd go Dutch. I'm a tease, not a monster.

I've always regarded Obama as a bit slight for the hype, a garnish in search of an entrée, a moment in search of momentousness. But attacking him for the slavish support his charisma inspires seems a bit unfair. It would be like faulting Hillary Clinton for her best qualities—like her rapier wit, slender ankles, and personal warmth.

Plus, I do support Obama on the issue. Not issues, mind you. I'm against almost everything he stands for, including hope and change (I'm for despair and preserving the status quo). But he's for standing over the rotting carcass of Hillary's political ambitions, and so am I! Some might call it venal small-mindedness. But Obama and I call it "post-partisanship." For Hillary is the one we've been waiting for. To go away.

Matt Labash

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the weekly Standard

Hear No Evil

On February 16, last year's bipartisan legislation governing the collection of foreign intelligence and protecting from liability all persons who comply with federal directives to assist in such collection—the law otherwise known as the "Protect America Act of 2007"—expired, having exhausted its six-month, 15-day statutory lifespan. At which time the federal government's ability to pursue suspected terrorists and emerging threats was dealt a serious blow. You can thank House Democrats for the whole sorry mess.

The Democratic leadership denies this, of course, having adopted an Alfred E. Neuman "What, Me Worry?" approach to national security. The lack of a new statute "does not, in reality, threaten the safety of Americans," protests Senate majority leader Harry Reid. The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 still applies. Says Senator Richard Durbin of Illinois, "The FISA law—even if we do not change it—gives ample authority to this president to continue to monitor the conversations of those who endanger the United States." Says House Intelligence Committee chairman Silvestre Reyes: "We cannot allow ourselves to be scared into suspending the Constitution." Democratic national-security-adviser-in-waiting Richard Clarke writes that "FISA has and still works as the most valuable mechanism for monitoring our enemies."

It is true that the wiretaps granted under the Protect America Act may be continued for a year from their date of issue. If a wiretap was approved on December 5, 2007, for example, it legally can remain in place until December 5, 2008. But any new wiretaps the government seeks will have to go through stringent FISA procedures, which require the government to show "probable cause" that a "U.S. person" is a "foreign power" or an "agent of a foreign power" before a search warrant targeting him can be issued. And this is troubling because—*pace* Richard Clarke—the old FISA didn't and doesn't work.

Let's review what brought us to this impasse. Back in December 2005, the *New York Times* reported that, "months after the Sept. 11 attacks," President Bush "secretly authorized" the National Security Agency (NSA) to "eavesdrop on Americans and others inside the United States" in order to gather intelligence "without the court-approved warrants ordinarily required for domestic spying." Now, the NSA's Terrorist Surveillance Program wasn't so secret, it turns out; select members of Congress, Democratic and Republican, had been informed of its existence long before the *Times*'s blockbuster report, and none of them seemed to have had a problem with it.

It turns out, further, that the NSA wasn't spying on Americans willy-nilly. Most of the warrantless surveillance targets were foreign nationals located overseas, though the program also surveilled the 500-odd people in the United States with whom those overseas targets were communicating. Nor was it at all clear whether or not FISA superseded the president's plenary, constitutional authority to "protect and defend" the United States from attack. No court has ever said so. And no administration, including Carter's and Clinton's, has ever accepted FISA as determinative of its constitutional power.

But that didn't matter. Congressional Democrats called the program "illegal." For a while, the president fought back, but 2005 turned into 2006, the year the Democrats took Congress. The Bush administration was weak. And so, for better or worse—okay, for worse—the president decided he was no longer in a position to engage in a public assertion of executive authority. The process was submitted to the authority of the FISA court and its 11 rotating judges. And it was only a matter of months before the system began to degrade.

The FISA court decided that calls or emails merely routed through the United States were, in fact, domestic communications falling under the "probable cause" evidentiary standard. It didn't matter that the target and the recipient of his communications might both be abroad—if the electrons zipped across the United States, as they often do in a globally networked world, then a warrant was required to listen in. By the miracle of technology, Abu Omar and Mullah Mohamed in Pakistan could both be "U.S. persons." Meanwhile, the ACLU and the tort bar filed lawsuits against the telecommunication companies that had cooperated with the U.S. government in the Terrorist Surveillance Program. Naturally, the telecoms, fearing that they soon would be paying damages, grew wary of cooperation with the government. And some of the FISA judges—the same folks often accused of "rubberstamping" the executive's wishes—raised the bar that needed to be met before counterterrorist surveillance could begin. Director of National Intelligence

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Mike McConnell recently told Fox News Channel's Chris Wallace that by summer 2007, "We were in extremis, because we had lost . . . about two-thirds of our [surveillance] capability."

It was this crisis that the Protect America Act addressed. It was by no means a perfect bill. It expanded the FISA court's authority by allowing it to retroactively review the surveillance programs—submitting national security decisions to an unelected and unaccountable judiciary—and also by requiring the president to disclose to the court on a regular basis the program's activities. But the Protect America Act did contain two important provisions. It formalized the administration's authority to conduct overseas wiretaps on foreign nationals without court approval, and it granted immunity from further lawsuits to the telecoms. Under the compromise, data collection could proceed without too much trouble. Until said compromise expired on February 16.

That's the history.

It was not for lack of trying that the Protect America Act died earlier this month. A bipartisan, two-to-one majority in the Senate voted for a new law that would renew the act's provisions, provide retroactive immunity to the telecoms that had participated in the Terrorist Surveillance Program, and even extend FISA warrant requirements for overseas targets who are Americans, evidence of the Bush administration's willingness to bend over backwards in search of a compromise. A bipartisan majority in the House is ready to vote for this law. No one disputes that these surveillance programs are necessary to prevent terrorist attacks upon the United States.

At issue is the so-called "retroactive immunity." The House Democratic leadership doesn't like it. Most of their arguments against retroactive immunity aren't any more sophisticated than Senator Edward Kennedy's disgusting assertion that President Bush is "willing to let Americans die to protect the phone companies." But the crux of the anti-immunity Democrats' argument seems to be that because the original Terrorist Surveillance Program was "illegal" and the phone companies were complicit in its "illegality," they therefore should be liable for damages resulting from such "illegal" invasions of privacy.

This is wrong on all counts. The Terrorist Surveillance Program was not illegal. And the telecoms were engaged in a good-faith effort to help the federal government protect the United States from attack. Isn't that how we should *want* corporations to behave in a time of war?

In the end, the fight over retroactive immunity may be something of a distraction. Even if the "more than 40" pending lawsuits we hear about went to trial, we're guessing the government and the telecoms would prevail. Just last week, the Supreme Court denied the ACLU's appeal of a Sixth Circuit ruling that the group and its co-plaintiffs lacked standing to sue because they could not prove harm. The Ninth Circuit last year ruled similarly against an Islamic charity that alleged the NSA was listening to its communications. No harm, no standing, no damages. It's unlikely the tort bar would profit much.

But the Democrats' lawyer friends have already wreaked a lot of havoc. The mere threat of such lawsuits is enough to make some phone companies think twice about helping the government. And maybe that's the point. The fight over retroactive immunity should be seen for what it is: a backdoor attempt to shut down the president's post-9/11 intelligence gathering efforts and return the intelligence community to a pre-9/11 footing, when the FISA court governed almost all counterterrorist surveillance and the standards of traditional law enforcement applied more often than not to investigations of suspected terrorists.

That is why the ACLU's website wants you to "tell House leaders" to "keep standing up to Bush" and thank Nancy Pelosi and Steny Hoyer for "standing up" to Bush's "bullying" and letting "his reckless and unconstitutional spying bill expire." That is why the leftwing Center for American Progress accuses Bush of "spouting fear" as Congress seeks to "rein in" his "reckless disregard of the Constitution and the law." These folks don't think the telecoms are the problem. They think any law that allows the president to go beyond the writ of the FISA court is the problem.

And that's pernicious nonsense. Apolitical career types like McConnell, FBI director Robert Mueller, and attorney general Michael Mukasey, along with Democrats like Senate Intelligence Committee chairman Jay Rockefeller, agree on this. It was fear of the FISA court, after all, that prevented Minnesota FBI field agents from searching the laptop of al Qaeda terrorist Zacarias Moussaoui—the suspicious student at the Pan Am International Flight Academy in Eagan, Minnesota—even though they knew about Moussaoui's jihadist beliefs and connection to a Chechen terrorist. That was the problem which the Terrorist Surveillance Program was meant to address. It was the sort of problem that the Protect America Act was meant to mitigate. But now we are returning to the place from which we began.

Congress returns from recess this week. As we go to press, Speaker Pelosi continues to indicate she will not allow a vote on the bipartisan Senate surveillance bill. This demonstrates a fundamental lack of seriousness about national security on the part of congressional Democrats. Newsflash: The United States faces a persistent threat of attack from a terrorist organization with global reach and the desire to massacre as many innocent people as possible. Do House Democrats really want to make the terrorists' jobs any easier?

—Matthew Continetti, for the Editors

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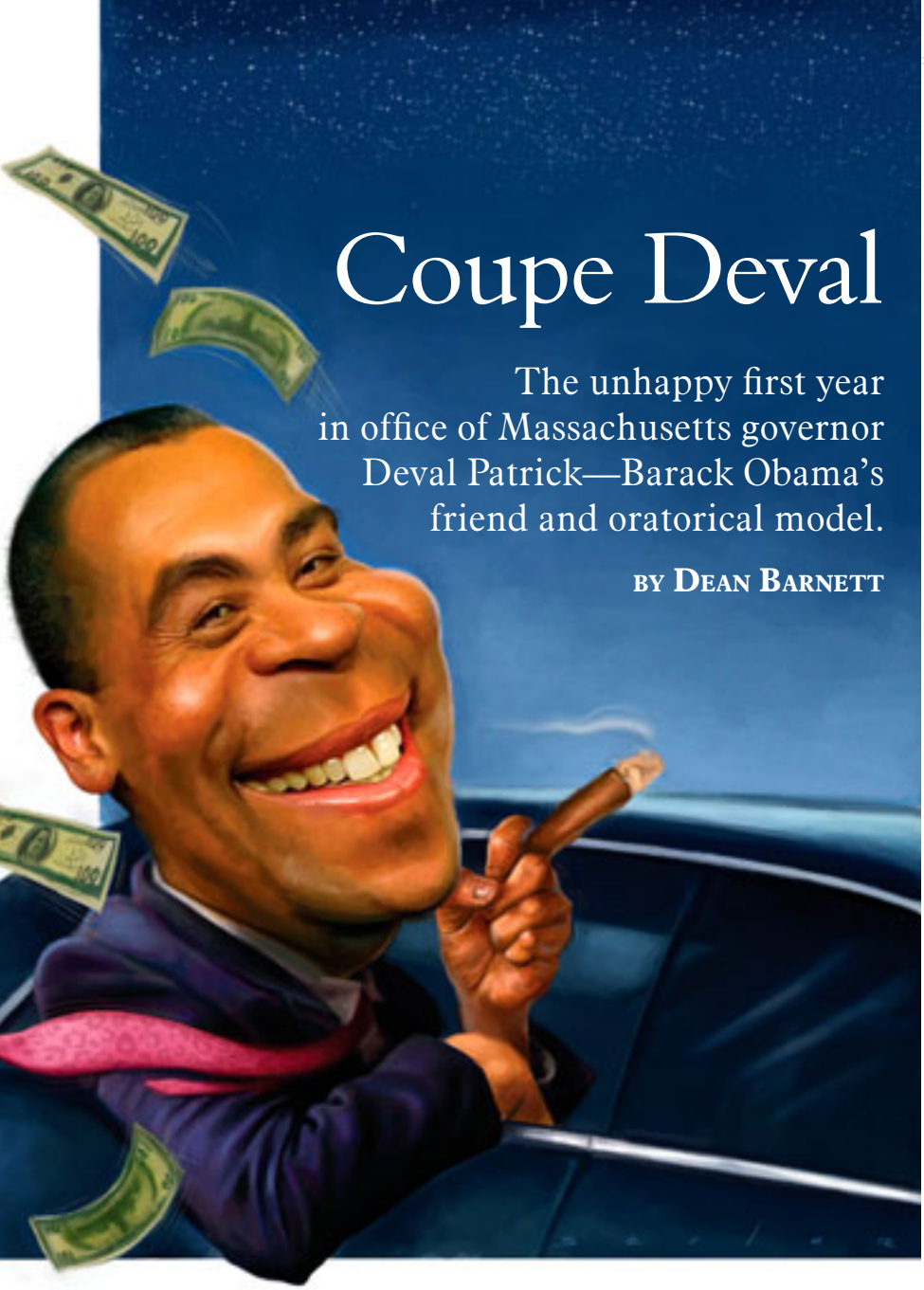

Coupe Deval

The unhappy first year in office of Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick—Barack Obama's friend and oratorical model.

BY DEAN BARNETT

Boston

Early last week, the presidential campaign was rocked by the "bombshell" that Barack Obama had borrowed certain rhetorical flourishes from Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick's 2006 gubernatorial campaign. The revelations were not universally regarded as shocking.

Anyone who was aware of the existence of Deval Patrick prior to the publication of this story could see the similarities between the Obama and Patrick campaigns. Both men ran campaigns based on hope. Both ostentatiously sought out a style that would transcend politics as usual. They shared a strategist, David Axelrod, who had penned vacuously uplifting prose for John Edwards long before Edwards became an angry populist trapped in a 28,000-square-foot mansion.

The Patrick campaign appeared to provide something of a blueprint for Obama. Patrick didn't start his race for governor with the advantage of celebrity that Obama brought to the presidential race. Nevertheless, his message of hope resonated, and he easily defeated formidable opponents in both the Democratic primary and the general election.

If anything—and you may find this difficult to believe—the Patrick campaign was less substantive than the Obama campaign. In 2006, Massachusetts's overwhelmingly Democratic legislature had passed Mitt Romney's universal health care law. The economy was good. And yet Patrick won the race relying on hollow rhetoric like, "I want you to understand, I am not asking anybody to take a chance on me. I'm asking you to take a chance on your own aspirations."

Not surprisingly, given its "double threat" status of being both vague and vapid, the line about the aspirations is one of the chestnuts that Obama has recycled during the presidential race. In November 2007, *USA Today* quoted Obama as saying, "But you see, I am not asking anyone to take a chance on me. I am asking you to take a chance on your own aspirations."

The irony of both Obama and Patrick's using that particular line is that when a candidate runs a campaign like Patrick's in '06 and Obama's today, voters who give them a victory are taking a very big chance. Such candidates base their campaigns not on their policy promises (such as the Patrick campaign's still unkept vow to get 1,000 more police officers on the Commonwealth's mean streets), but on their personalities and leadership. If the voters ratify such a campaign, they give the candidate the kind of blank check that a victor who ran on a less frothy agenda could only dream of.

Many Americans may wonder what's happened to Patrick since he arrived at Boston's golden-domed state house with a mandate to be hopeful and aspirational. It turns out the governor has spent his first year in office all dressed up with no place to govern.

Given the narcissistic nature of the politics of hope, it's unsurprising

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that much of the Patrick administration has revolved around the whimsy and caprice of Deval Patrick himself. Patrick came to office seeming determined to glorify himself with unprecedented gubernatorial flights of ego. One of his initial executive decisions was to lease a brand new Cadillac in which he would be chauffeured around the state—at taxpayer expense, even though Patrick and his wife are extremely wealthy.

Mitt Romney had used the same Ford Crown Victoria for his entire four years in office. Patrick deemed Romney's ride insufficiently opulent, and yet defended leasing the much more expensive Caddy by insisting that Ford had discontinued the Crown Victoria. Only Ford hadn't discontinued the Crown Vic, much to the relief of police forces everywhere.

This escapade earned Patrick the nickname "Coupe Deval" from hostiles in the local media. In an attempt to make the matter go away, Patrick decided weeks after the story broke that he would pay the state the $543-a- month difference between the pedestrian Crown Vic and the more elegant Caddy. He announced his decision with characteristic politics-of-hope self-aggrandizement, saying, "I cannot in good conscience ask [state] agencies to make those [fiscal] choices without being willing to make them myself."

Patrick was just getting warmed up. He hired a full-time scheduler for his wife, a partner at one of Boston's biggest law firms. The scheduler who got the decidedly light task of scheduling first lady duties for a woman with an all-consuming full-time job was the female half of the husband and wife team who had coordinated Patrick's campaign fundraising. The Commonwealth agreed to pay her $72,000 a year for her services. Patrick's wife was the first Massachusetts first lady since Kitty Dukakis to rate her own scheduler.

Patrick also showed the world that he didn't crave creature comforts only on the road. The *Boston Globe* reported on his ambitious redesign of the governor's office back in February:

> Governor Deval Patrick spent more than $10,000 on damask drapes for his State House office as part of a $27,387 makeover that also included a new desk, settee, and other furnishings paid for with taxpayer money.

Don't be fooled by the *Globe*'s vague and contradictory wording. Originally, Patrick didn't spend a cent on damask drapes or the other little touches. The taxpayers footed the bill. Only when the story became public did Patrick once again cut the Commonwealth a check.

As if to underscore the fact that rhetoric matters a lot more on the campaign trail than in the corner office, Patrick capped a year of embarrassments with a 9/11 reminiscence in which he labeled the attacks of that day "mean and nasty" but also "a failure of human beings to understand each other, to learn to love each other."

Translating hope into policy is harder than campaign speeches make it sound. Patrick's formidable ego has dominated his first year in office, and Obama is no slouch in that regard.

As to the substance of the Patrick regime, there still hasn't been any. Even the liberal *Boston Globe*, in a review of Patrick's first year as governor, acknowledged that it had "been marked by initial high-profile missteps, political frustrations, and a senior staff shakeup. … Most of his agenda remains stalled in the Legislature." But it's not as if the Patrick administration has lacked magnificent victories for the politics of hope. The *Globe* also reports,

> Of the management hires in the administration, 19 percent are minorities, more than double the Romney administration's numbers. Patrick has hired a staff that is made up of 27 percent of people of color and more than half have been women.

Also noteworthy is the fact that Patrick now has a new signature issue, something that cuts an odd figure within the politics of hope. Patrick wants to license three resort casinos in the Commonwealth. This apparent effort to balance the budget on the backs of the gambler community may ultimately be effective, but it seems awfully cynical for a hope-monger like Patrick.

An Obama administration in Washington wouldn't necessarily be a replay on a larger and more important stage of the stumbling Patrick regime. Obama in many ways seems like a refined and perfected version of Patrick. Where Patrick is short and doughy, Obama is tall and taut. While Patrick often sounds as if he just took a swig of helium, Obama speaks in a soothing baritone. Obama also appears to be much sharper and savvier than Patrick.

Obama may also prove to be a better chief executive than Patrick has. Then again, with no mandate from the voters to guide him on specific issues and a much more complex set of problems confronting him (not to mention his lack of management experience), he may turn out even worse. As Patrick has proven, translating hope into policy is harder than campaign speeches make it sound. Patrick's formidable ego has dominated his first year in office, and Obama is no slouch in that regard.

In Massachusetts, Barack Obama received the endorsements of Ted Kennedy, John Kerry, and of course his secret sharer, Deval Patrick. Yet the Bay State turned out to be one of Hillary Clinton's last redoubts of strength, giving her a comfortable double-digit victory. It's worth pondering: What is it that Massachusetts Democrats have learned about the "politics of hope" that the rest of the country hasn't? ♦

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Never Apologize, Never Explain

Obama's Achilles' heel?

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

Michelle Obama

CHRIS KEANE / REUTERS / CORBIS

Madison, Wisconsin

Michelle Obama made headlines last week with comments she offered at two rallies in Wisconsin. She said, "For the first time in my adult lifetime, I'm really proud of my country. And not just because Barack has done well, but because I think people are hungry for change."

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Coming from a potential first lady, this remark created a stir. The next day, Barack Obama came to his wife's defense, sort of. "What she meant was, this is the first time that she's been proud of the politics of America," he said, "because she's pretty cynical about the political process, and with good reason, and she's not alone." Two days later, Mrs. Obama clarified her remark, (again, sort of) saying, "What I was clearly talking about was that I'm proud of how Americans are engaging in the political process."

On the one hand, the tack the candidate took was a surprising one. After all, the cost of really tidying up his wife's small mess would have been quite low: Just say that she'd misspoken and didn't mean what she'd seemed to be saying. In other words, basically apologize and retract. That would have foreclosed further discussion of Mrs. Obama's comment.

Instead, Obama's reaction was in keeping with the way he has dealt with his campaign's few problems thus far: minimizing difficulties rather than laying them to rest.

The first problem to present itself was Jeremiah A. Wright, the pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, where Obama has been a member for over 20 years. Wright preaches "black liberation theology," talks about "this racist United States of America," and in one recorded sermon observed that "racism is how this country was founded and how this country is still run." As Wright and his church's "Black Value System" began attracting press and blogger attention shortly before Obama announced his candidacy, Obama quietly took Wright off the program for his February announcement and said, "We don't agree on everything. . . . I've never had a thorough conversation with him about all aspects of politics."

Then in a July presidential debate, Obama was asked if he would meet individually, and without precondition, with the leaders of Iran, Syria, Venezuela, Cuba, and North Korea. Without hesitation, he responded that he would. It was a spectacular gaffe, and Obama's chief strategist, David Axelrod, immediately tried to clarify and condition the comment, suggesting that the candidate wouldn't really meet one-on-one with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Kim Jong Il. But Obama's response was to dig in and reiterate his commitment to unconditional personal meetings with the world's worst despots. He repeated that commit-

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ment with respect to Raúl Castro in Thursday's Democratic debate.

In a story last October, a reporter recounted noticing that Obama had stopped wearing a pin of the American flag on his lapel. When questioned about it, the candidate could have shrugged it off. Instead, he turned his dropping of the pin into a statement, saying, "You know, the truth is that right after 9/11, I had a pin. Shortly after 9/11, particularly because as we're talking about the Iraq war, that became a substitute for I think true patriotism, which is speaking out on issues that are of importance to our national security, I decided I won't wear that pin on my chest."

Obama is certainly an attractive candidate and a charming and thoughtful man. And taken individually, each of these incidents is small. Obama has dealt with each by tamping down controversy, offering minimal explanation, and sticking to his guns. This may continue to work for him, or it may present problems for him down the road.

For one thing, it hints at a certain arrogance. One of the standard lines in Obama's stump speech is that he knows he won't be a perfect president and that he will count on people to hold him accountable. Yet on the rare occasions when Obama is held to account for misjudgments or mistakes, he simply tucks his chin down and brazens ahead. Slips are unavoidable on the long campaign trail. But Obama seems all too willing to turn them into matters of personal privilege rather than reversing himself, distancing himself, or fixing a mistake.

The other danger stems from Obama's unwillingness to put issues to bed. By allowing them to linger, he gives hostages to fortune. By letting his wife's line about America, for instance, hover without total disavowal, he's exposing himself to criticism down the road. This pattern of not facing up to and resolving problems as they arise could lead to future troubles for the Obama campaign. ♦

Obama of the North

The cautionary tale of Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

BY LIONEL CHETWYND

Chris Matthews tells us that Obama's victory speech after the Potomac primaries he felt "this thrill going up my leg." Frothing on, he invokes the last Democrat to carry Virginia, JFK. Brit Hume runs a replay of an audience member at the same speech enjoying an almost orgasmic reaction. Again, someone mumbles the sainted Kennedy name. Even as Obamamania reaches new heights, those of us who were actually on hand for John Kennedy's squeaker victory over the dour Richard Nixon in 1960 do not recall Kennedy's evoking the deep, visceral excitement Obama summons. It appears the infection now loosed upon the land is rarer than any seen in 1960—more unusual even than the state of mind induced after 1963, when the masterminds of Camelot hawked their false memories.

Yet, rare as it is, this virus is one I've seen before. It devastated a country I loved, the place that had raised me and nurtured me. Back in the Canada of 1968, in the wake of "Beatlemania," we called the malady "Trudeaumania," deliberately invoking pop-idol glitter.

Even those of us who held posts in his own Liberal party were powerless to thwart the mad embrace millions of Canadians threw around Pierre Elliott Trudeau, with his promise to reconcile the two founding peoples, to unite the English (more correctly, Scottish) heritage with the French legacy and take us forward into a brave new age. He promised, too, to reforge our relationship with "the elephant to our south" and to elevate Canada's role in the world. What that actually meant or how it was to be achieved never seemed worth mentioning, as if the mere stating of the intention were equivalent to a result realized.

As a candidate in 1968, Trudeau was completely nonspecific, avoiding policy questions and depending entirely on style and panache. This would surely undo him, or so we reassured ourselves, those of us who believed him to be a hard-line leftist because we'd read his essays in *Cité Libre* and studied his academic writings at the University of Montreal. We were wrong: His lack of specificity was his strength. A brilliant and smiling Savile Row-suited orator, he spun webs around huge crowds, proposing big ideas in obscure terms, leaving listeners to discover in his speeches their own dreams. He was all things to all people. And out of party loyalty and civility, we held our tongues.

Meantime, the delighted English-language media, at last presented with a French-speaking Canadian they could love, dubbed him "Canada's JFK." He would serve as prime minister for 15 years (1968-79 and 1980-84). The damage to what Canada had stood for would be staggering.

Before Trudeau, Canada still basked in the glory of its own Greatest Generation. Canada had raised the largest army in the world, per capita, to fight Hitler (1.4 million from a population of 11 million). Emerging from World War II as a leading industrial power, it had devoted a vast part of its treasure to financing the Colombo Plan, "the Marshall Plan of Asia." Parts of the infrastructure used to this day in Pakistan, India, and

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HERMAN MEJIA

South Asia were paid for by Canadians. Those same Canadians generally viewed the United States with affection, even admiration. True, many harbored a residual anger at America's more than two-year delay in entering World War II, but that was a family squabble, easily put aside. They had no laws barring or limiting the flow of American popular culture across the border. That Canada's moment of triumph came in the summer of 1967 with the hugely successful Montreal world's fair known as Expo '67.

All this changed when Trudeau became prime minister, overwhelming more experienced candidates for the party leadership with his amazing style. Once in power, he led Canada down a radical new path, muddying what had been a clear sense of identity, deemphasizing the country's Scottish-French roots in favor of a more ambiguous European model. The new Canadian identity—ardently embraced in the early Trudeau years—was equivocal. It stressed multiculturalism rather than biculturalism, extolled diversity and "international consensus," and cast the very existence of the United States as sinister while rushing to recognize Communist China and Cuba. This revolution would remake Canada into something its prewar self would hardly recognize. A people once proud of their history would be weaned away from it and remade into a relativistic, postmodern nation.

How was a strong and self-reliant people so easily led astray? Trudeaumania. Look no further than Chris Matthews to understand the uncritical devotion Trudeau summoned forth.

For one thing, he tapped into Canadians' apprehension at a world becoming difficult to fathom. He ran for office at a time when nationalism, even Separatism, was taking on large dimensions in Quebec. Visiting Montreal for Expo '67, President Charles de Gaulle of France had stood on the balcony at City Hall before a huge throng and proclaimed the Separatists' slogan: "*Vive le Québec! Vive le Québec libre!*" It seemed that Canada's singular voice in the international arena was weakening, and even the prime minister—Lester Pearson, winner of a Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 for engineering the U.N. Emergency Force that helped defuse the Suez crisis—could not arrest the trend. America was preoccupied in Southeast Asia. The world suddenly demanded a new thoughtfulness. The "old" way of doing things, cooed Trudeau, was *so* 1950s.

Put away your troubles, said the silver-tongued candidate, and enraptured Canadians followed, without ever learning where he intended to lead. Trudeaumania was the elixir that blotted out a newly complex world. It was also, by any intelligent measure, a disaster, one Canadians are only now beginning to understand.

Rather than reconcile the two founding cultures, the new prime minister so alienated Quebec that Separatist terrorism in Montreal soon forced Trudeau to declare martial law. In private, the de facto Francophone leader, René Lévesque, derisively called him "Elliott" (his Anglophone mother's name), and the division became so bitter the Separatists soon captured both the provincial government in Quebec and the opposition in Ottawa.

Trudeau destroyed the friendly relationship with the United States, inviting a trickle of draft evaders to turn into an onrush. His pet project, the "repatriation" from Britain of the Canadian constitution and the addition of a Charter of Rights, had the effect of handing the courts sway over virtually every aspect of Canadian life, while diminishing the power of the elected bodies. Even after he was finally replaced, briefly by the Liberal John Turner, then by the Tory Brian Mulroney, Trudeau was able to scuttle attempts to alter the Trudeau formula. In short, he succeeded in remaking the country in his own image.

To many Canadians, especially the huge number now on the left, the view of Trudeau offered here is heresy. It is nevertheless history—a history that contains a cautionary tale. ♦

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The *New York Times* vs. John McCain

All the rumors fit to print.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Shortly after sundown on Wednesday night, the *New York Times* posted on its website a long story about John McCain, a female lobbyist, and the relationship—professional and perhaps personal—between the two. By midday Friday, executive editor Bill Keller had taken to the paper's website to offer a defense that, according to *Time* magazine's Blake Dvorak, represented "surrender from the editor." Dvorak concluded: "Unless the *Times* has further evidence of infidelity, this is a closed case."

The story first surfaced publicly in late December, when the Drudge Report noted efforts by the McCain campaign to squelch a *New York Times* article raising allegations about favorable treatment for a "female lobbyist." Drudge also reported a rift between the reporters on the story, who were pushing for publication, and their editors, who counseled caution. McCain, who had already hired Washington power lawyer Bob Bennett, denied the allegations at a press conference on December 20, 2007. The story seemed to disappear as quickly as it had arisen.

But among reporters following the campaign and within the *Times* itself discussions intensified. Most campaign reporters quickly knew at least the broad outlines of the story and details about the dispute over whether it was fit for publication. The consensus among journalists covering the Republican primary contest was that the story, having been partially exposed on Drudge, would be nearly impossible to contain.

McCain gained momentum after he won New Hampshire and South Carolina. But even as he seemed increasingly likely to be the Republican nominee, the *Times* story lurked as a threat to his candidacy. It was a regular topic of discussion among reporters traveling with McCain as he racked up victories.

Last week, after winning in Wisconsin, McCain publicly acknowledged his status for the first time: "Thank you, Wisconsin, for bringing us to the point when even a superstitious naval aviator can claim with confidence and humility that I will be our party's nominee for president." The *Times* story broke less than 24 hours later. The headline on the Drudge Report noted the timing: "Now That He's Secured Nomination: NYT Downloads on McCain."

McCain advisers don't dispute suggestions of that connection, and they moved quickly to raise money off of the perception that their candidate was being attacked because of his politics. But several of them believe it was a forthcoming story in the *New Republic* about the dispute between the *Times* reporters and editors over the story more than the inevitability of McCain as the GOP nominee that pushed the *Times* to publish.

Whatever the reason, the *Times* chose to play the story big. It was the off-lead of the paper, running above the fold in the two upper left-hand columns, and at more than 3,000 words. Four reporters received bylines, a fact that further suggested the seriousness of the investigation.

The big problem for the *Times* remained: The story was almost entirely attributed to "people involved in the campaign" speaking "on the condition of anonymity." The *Times* had only one former McCain adviser who would speak for the record, and his comment did not speak directly to the alleged affair, which was, despite the *Times*'s awkward attempts to pretend otherwise, the most potentially newsworthy aspect of the piece.

For a supposedly explosive story, talked about for months, it was remarkably thin.

The editors of *U.S. News & World Report* and *Time* magazine both said publicly that they would not have published the article. It was not, to borrow a phrase, fit to print. The piece was so underwhelming that many believe the paper must have more evidence that, for whatever reason, it decided not to publish. Why would reporters regarded as serious and talented fight so hard to get something so thin into the paper? (One of the reporters, Marilyn Thompson, has since left the *Times* for reasons at least partly related to the conflicts before its publication.)

Both McCain and the lobbyist, Vicki Iseman, have denied any romantic relationship. Other publications have follow-up investigations going, and it is still possible that the *Times* will bolster its initial report with more substantiation. If McCain did have an affair, his remarkable comeback story will end as a tragedy. At press time, however, it seems more likely than not that the episode will be remembered as a monumental embarrassment to America's newspaper of record.

By Friday, even McCain's team seemed surprised at how quickly their fortunes had changed. Shortly after the story broke, Mark Salter, a top McCain adviser, had told *Time* magazine's Ana Marie Cox that the campaign would be releasing "dozens" of statements from McCain defenders who talked to the *New York Times* for the piece but were not included in the published version. But those materials never went out. Pushback was deemed unnecessary.

On the *Times*'s website, Bill Keller admitted he was taken aback by the response. "I was surprised by how lopsided the opinion was against our

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decision [to publish] with readers who described themselves as independents and Democrats joining Republicans in defending Mr. McCain from what they saw as a cheap shot."

In comments over the two days of controversy, Keller denied that the imminent story from the *New Republic* or presidential politics played any role. "You can't let the electoral calendar govern your judgment about when to publish stories," Keller told *Washington Post* media writer Howard Kurtz.

Maybe the timing was coincidental. Better for McCain that such a scandal story run now than, say, in early January or late October. In fact, Keller's protests would be more persuasive if not for the way his paper handled—a better word may be "stoked"—a controversy in the final days of the 2004 presidential election.

Beginning on October 25, 2004, with just over a week left until Election Day, the *Times* ran 16 articles and opinion pieces about looting at the al Qaqaa munitions facility in Iraq. Some of the stories were implicitly critical of the Bush administration, others were directly so. The *Times* dismissed suggestions that the attention on the issue was politically motivated. But, as *National Review*'s Byron York asked four months later: "Why was the Al Qaqaa story so important in the eight days leading up to the election that it merited two stories per day, and so unimportant after the election that it has not merited any stories at all?"

Those memories could not have been far from the mind of Scott Stanzel, a White House spokesman, when he rather surprisingly offered a comment on the current *Times* controversy: "I think a lot of people here in this building with experience in a couple campaigns have grown accustomed to the fact that during the course of the campaign, seemingly on maybe a monthly basis leading up to the convention, maybe weekly basis after that, the *New York Times* does try to drop a bombshell on the Republican nominee. . . . Sometimes they make incredible leaps to try to drop those bombshells."

Indeed. ♦

It's Not Over Till It's Over

Hillary still has a chance.

BY JOHN J. DIIULIO JR.

My American politics undergraduate students tease me without mercy for predicting a year ago that the Democratic nomination was Hillary Clinton's to lose. (I also predicted that Mike Huckabee would outlast all the Republican hopefuls except maybe John McCain. "Professor D's latest lucky guess," they joke.)

But when the teasing stops the questions start. "Do you think there is any way that Barack Obama can lose?" they ask. I say nothing, and they share self-reassurances: "There's no way for Clinton to beat him now . . . right?" "C'mon, McCain is way behind him in the polls!" I can no longer stay mum: "Well, Hillary led by double-digits in all but a few polls for over a year, and she's still ahead in Ohio, Texas, and Pennsylvania." Their somber faces make me wish I had said "Hey, nine straight with Wisconsin; he's in!" or handed out "Yes We Can" buttons.

Hillary-backers and College Republicans are not extinct on my campus. But the undergraduate enthusiasm for Obama transcends gender, race, religion, region, income, and party affiliation. I have been teaching American politics for a quarter-century and never have I seen so many students inspired by a candidate. And it's not just an Ivy League or secular-elite university phenomenon. The national polling data prove as much, as do exit poll numbers on young voters. Colleagues who teach at religious and other colleges attest to it too.

I have been teaching American politics for a quarter-century and never have I seen so many students inspired by a candidate. And it's not just an Ivy League or secular-elite university phenomenon.

My students may yet get their wish. But for all that Obama has achieved so far as a hope-inspiring, crowd-swelling candidate with great appeal to young voters, and despite the successive thrashings that Clinton has received since Super Tuesday, she can still win the Democratic nomination. And if Obama does get by Clinton, an even steeper challenge awaits in John McCain.

Obama has had some stirring, even brave, things to say: most notably concerning how public education has failed too many low-income children in urban America. Organizationally, the teachers' unions are the Democratic party's throbbing heart. Obama, to his credit, was not on their Valentine's Day list. They will lean against him in several upcoming big-state primaries, and as a super-delegate bloc too.

And Clinton can deflate Obama's "change" balloon by relentlessly asking him why he decries the "politics" of the "past 15 years." Does he dislike the Clinton-era presidential politics that expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit, widely regarded as the single most successful anti-

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poverty initiative of that period? Does he mean the bipartisan bills of the 1990s that led to work-based welfare reform? Does he mean the politics of the "past" that yielded the State Children's Health Insurance Program? Or maybe he means rolling back post-1993 expansions in Medicare coverage or college loans or spending on low-income (Title I) schools.

Older Democrats, respectful of legislative accomplishments, particularly may not like that Obama often voted "present" as an Illinois legislator, or that his state and federal records seem so thin. Blue collar voters who earn $50,000 a year or less defected from Clinton in the Potomac primaries and again in Wisconsin. But in Texas, Ohio, and Pennsylvania she may hold voters who can't cut work the way college kids can cut class to attend midday campaign rallies.

Indeed, with big Latino turnouts expected in Texas, older working-class Ohio voters sticking to her like rust, and friends in Pennsylvania like Governor Edward Rendell and Philly's popular new mayor Michael Nutter, Clinton can still nab the nomination. Fence-sitting super-delegates would quickly warm to a three-state sweep.

Obama and his proxies keep repeating that "party insiders" (aka Clinton-backing super-delegates) should not decide the election against the "will of the people." Obama also favors the Democratic National Committee (it doesn't get any more "inside" than that) denying Clinton the delegates she won when millions of people expressed their will by casting ballots in the Florida and Michigan Democratic primaries.

Clinton herself agreed to have Florida and Michigan penalized for moving up the date of the their primaries. But that won't keep her from trying to turn Obama's public relations flank and use the "will of the people" against him—while also depicting front-running him as the "establishment" candidate. Listen for her to get at how the people's will squares with deference to national insiders' right to punish the states' insiders for holding their primaries before the former "party bosses" had dictated. Listen for her seconds to echo this: Situational solicitude for the "will of the people" might be expected from politicians drenched in the "past," but from the "change" candidate? With the press now dialing back its year-old Obamamania, the disingenuous whining might just work.

Clinton and Obama have not had a serious debate about Iraq. As Obama proclaims, almost as often as he says "change," he opposed from the start giving the president war-making authority. Stipulate that he was right—as most Democrats and a public plurality do—and then ask how, exactly, he reasoned his way to that decision when Colin Powell, John Kerry, and many others with no less information and much greater experience did not? Did he analyze the available prewar data differently, and, if so, how? Unlike Democrats from Joe Biden to Joe Lieberman, why did Obama never offer a serious plan to fix the poorly executed, pre-surge occupation?

How can he be so absolute about bringing all troops home by a date certain? How does that year-before-the-act pledge constitute being 'as careful' getting out as we were 'careless' going in?

As pleasing as his pledge is to the party faithful, how can he be so absolute about bringing all troops home by a date certain? How does that year-before-the-act pledge constitute being "as careful" getting out as we were "careless" going in? Conceding that a "new" global politics would be welcome, what wisdom is he seeking with crusty old foreign policy hands like Zbigniew Brzezinski on his national security team?

If Clinton does not have this debate with Obama, McCain surely will. There is no reason to trust any pre-October 2008 polls showing Obama beating McCain, including those now showing him beating McCain by a larger margin than Clinton would. Obama would be the second consecutive Democratic standard-bearer ranked the Senate's most liberal member by nonpartisan outlets like *National Journal*. He leapt leftward as he positioned himself to run for president: a "composite liberal score" of 95.5 out of 100 in 2007, up from 82.5 and a 16th-place finish in 2005. (Clinton's 2007 score was 82.8, and her lifetime score is 79.4.)

In a general election, there will be some McCain Democrats. Obama Republicans are more of a question, and independents could be either man's flock. Many general election scenarios remain possible, but, as I reckon it, the only one forecasting a Democratic victory that respects mass-electorate math and state-by-state statistics is a few-point win over McCain that involves McCain getting millions fewer evangelical votes than Bush did in 2004, the Democratic ticket getting as many or more African-Americans as Kerry-Edwards did in 2004, and the sleeping giant Latino vote going decisively against McCain.

Other scenarios for a Democratic win against McCain all pretty much assume that the stubborn post-1996 red state-blue state realities will be changed by a change-agent candidate. Obama generated voter enthusiasm even in Republican Kansas, and he may prove to be a party-realigning candidate, but believing so at this stage requires, well, the audacity of hope.

If Obama wins any two of the Texas, Ohio, Pennsylvania primary trio, then he is virtually certain to be the nominee. One thing is for sure: If he doesn't win, I won't be teasing my sure-to-be down-hearted students. ♦

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Egypt's Identity Crisis

Religious tolerance for some.

BY PAUL MARSHALL

When the newly nominated American ambassador to Cairo, Margaret Scobey, testified at her Senate confirmation hearing on February 6, she listed many current problems in Egypt and pledged to do work to advance civil and political liberties there. Apart from a reference to including religious leaders in "people-to-people exchanges," however, she omitted the most difficult issue: the religious tensions currently gripping Egyptian life.

Her testimony took place in the wake of several important verdicts handed down by Egypt's Court of Administrative Justice granting relief to specific religious minorities from requirements relating to their national identity cards. Given the country's poor human rights record, these verdicts offer some welcome good news, and have provoked sweeping headlines.

As with so much else under the Mubarak regime, however, appearances are deceiving. First, since in practice the powerful executive branch makes the final decisions on controversial matters, it remains to be seen whether the verdicts will be executed. Meanwhile, the government's stance during the controversy underscores the country's increasing Islamization.

On January 29, the court ruled that Egypt's Baha'is may leave the religion box on their identity cards blank and will no longer be forced to choose one of the officially permitted identities—Muslim, Christian, or Jew. On February 9, it ruled that 12 Christians who had previously converted to Islam may convert back and have their identity documents changed to reflect this.

This is no small matter. Without a valid identity card one cannot marry, enroll in school, get a job, open a bank account, or pass through any of the many police checkpoints. Hence, the judges should be commended, as should the plaintiffs, their lawyers, and the human rights activists who put themselves in danger by bringing these cases. Some received death threats.

> The government's stance reflects the regime's push for, or acquiescence in, an increasingly Islamist state as it seeks to avoid being outflanked in its Islamic credentials by the Muslim Brotherhood.

But there are problems, major ones, with the verdicts. The court ruled that "reconverts" must have the word "ex-Muslim" on their IDs. This essentially marks them as apostates and exposes them to persecution and attack.

Furthermore, the court's decisions are exceedingly narrow, as a third verdict shows. On the same day that it handed down its Baha'i decision, the court also ruled that Mohammed Hegazy, who was born a Muslim, could not have his conversion to Christianity recognized since "monotheistic religions were sent by God in chronological order" and therefore one cannot convert to "an older religion."

Hegazy had converted in 1998. He had been tortured by the police for three days, and had been arrested on other occasions. On August 2, 2007, he brought a case challenging the government's refusal to recognize his conversion. After receiving death threats, including from his own father, he went into hiding. His lawyer, Mamdouh Nakhla, withdrew after also receiving death threats. Radical Islamic clerics, including Youssef al-Badry, called for Hegazy's death and filed charges against Nakhla of "inciting sectarian strife," a criminal offense.

Other converts suffer worse fates. On November 22, 2007, police in Qena arrested Siham Ibrahim Muhammad Hassan al-Sharqawi, a Muslim convert to Christianity who had been in hiding since 2003. She was interrogated for four days and threatened with beatings. Since November 27, her whereabouts have been unknown.

Hegazy's and al-Sharqawi's situation differs from that of the 12 reconverts since the two were born Muslim. Their plight, however, and that of other converts who live in hiding or have fled into exile shows the dangers of trying to survive in Egypt as an "ex-Muslim." Al-Badry has already said he will bring a civil case against the 12 since it is the state's duty "to punish the apostates."

Most worrisome, the administrative court's authority and decisions are further weakened by the government's increasing deference to *sharia* as interpreted by Al Azhar, the major Muslim educational center in Egypt, and the Sunni world generally.

For example, in April 2006, the Ministry of the Interior consulted Al Azhar's Islamic Research Center, whose subsequent fatwa described the Baha'i faith as a "heresy" and referenced its own 1985 opinion that accused Baha'is of supporting Zionism and imperialism and labeled them "apostates."

Then, in October 2006, a pro-government paper, *Roz Al-Youssef*, pub-

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lished excerpts from a government report arguing that, since the Baha'i faith was not a "divine religion," its followers were not protected by constitutional guarantees of freedom of belief and religion. It recommended that Baha'is be "identified, confronted, and singled out so that they could be watched carefully, isolated and monitored in order to protect the rest of the population as well as Islam from their danger, influence, and teachings." There is no indication that the government's views have changed.

The government also consulted Al Azhar on reconversions back to Christianity, and the fatwa committee described them as "a grave crime that cannot be met with leniency." On May 1, 2007, according to the newspaper *Sout el Oma*, Interior Minister Habib al-Adly sent a memo to the Administrative Court insisting that Islam, the state religion, demands that any Muslim man who abandons his faith should be killed, while a Muslim woman "apostate should be imprisoned and beaten every three days until she returns to Islam."

The government's stance reflects the regime's push for, or acquiescence in, an increasingly Islamist state as it seeks to avoid being outflanked in its Islamic credentials by its main opposition, the Muslim Brotherhood.

It is in the U.S. interest that Egypt end its religious identity politics. On Al Hurra television (U.S. broadcasting to the Middle East)—which to its credit ran an hour-long panel on the religion cases—Nakhla, the Christians' lawyer, and Gamal al-Banna, the progressive Egyptian scholar and brother of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, both urged dropping the religion box altogether from identity cards since it "opened the door for discrimination." America should press Egypt to do this.

Unless the United States, particularly the State Department, overcomes its continuing aversion to treating religion as an integral part of foreign policy, we may watch uncomprehendingly as Egypt, as well as other parts of the Middle East, slide further into radical Islam. ♦

Michael Moore with a Security Clearance

How did this leftist professor end up in the intelligence community? BY GABRIEL SCHOENFELD

How do we explain the bizarre recent National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran, which stated in its opening sentence that the ayatollahs had halted their nuclear weapons program in 2003, even as, tucked away in a footnote, the same document noted that the most critical component of such a weapons program—uranium enrichment—was proceeding at full tilt?

Even Mike McConnell, the director of national intelligence, the man who presides over the 16 agencies that comprise the U.S. "intelligence community," was compelled to back away from the assessment issued by his own subordinates. In retrospect, he said in testimony before Congress on February 5, "I probably would have changed a thing or two" in the way the intelligence was presented to the public. The "halt" referred to in the NIE, he conceded, involved the "least significant part" of the program, which was "the only thing" in the Iranian nuclear effort that actually may have stopped.

McConnell's repudiation of the work of his own staff raises some obvious questions about the organization of his office. One such question: Is anyone in charge of quality control in the cockpit of the most pivotal intelligence position in the United States?

There is in fact a bureaucratic unit designed for such a task. Back in September, McConnell appointed an "assistant deputy director of national intelligence for analytic integrity and standards." The occupant of this position is to ensure that intelligence products—reports like the NIE—are created according to accepted norms and are vetted properly for accuracy and lack of bias. The same official also serves as the "analytic ombudsman" of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. In other words, he is the individual who investigates complaints by others of shortcomings in the production of intelligence analyses.

Who holds this critical job? The present incumbent is one Richard H. Immerman, who up until his appointment was a professor at Temple University and the author of a number of books, including one about CIA depredations in Guatemala. Immerman has an essay in the current issue of *Diplomatic History*, the scholarly journal of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, and it makes for interesting reading.

Titled "Intelligence and Strategy," Immerman's article is a survey of the various ways that intelligence has been distorted for political purposes across the history of the CIA. It ranges over a great many issues of historical importance, including Vietnam and the Soviet-American arms race, and also more recent controversies, like the Bush administration's decision to depose Saddam Hussein.

Immerman, it emerges quite rapidly in the article, is not a dispassionate student of these matters, but a combatant in the political intelligence wars himself. He traces a fair amount of the CIA's present troubles back to George H.W. Bush, who served as agency director under Gerald Ford. Once ensconced at Langley, writes Immerman, the future president "kowtowed to apoplectic conservatives," who were accusing the CIA of minimiz-

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ing the pace and scale of the Soviet nuclear arms build-up. This led him to establish a group of outside analysts—dubbed Team B and headed by the "rabid anti-Soviet ideologue Richard Pipes"—to examine critically CIA findings. Team B "predictably ravaged" the existing CIA estimates and "undermined the agency's credibility" even though all of its findings, according to Immerman, were themselves just plain "wrong."

When George W. Bush became president in 2000, he brought with him a coterie of advisers from the same pernicious school of thinkers responsible for Team B. Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and the "ersatz Straussian" Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz—"abetted" by National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice—were convinced that, just as in the 1970s, the United States faced grave threats that the CIA entirely failed to appreciate. The "near-theological conviction" of these high-ranking administration officials, writes Immerman, quoting James Risen of the *New York Times* and David Corn of the *Nation*, was that the CIA was in thrall to a conventional wisdom that "obscured the sinister plottings of America's enemies."

With "insidious" intent, these morbidly suspicious "Bushites" leaned on the CIA to find a nuclear program in Iraq when there was none. Indeed, Cheney, Immerman writes, "went so far as to camp out at Langley to watch over analysts' shoulders" as they performed their work. Though the CIA had biases of its own that led to its erroneous prewar assessment that Iraq was acquiring WMDs, Bush and his subordinates ultimately caused the larger scandal. Indeed, they made "every effort to 'cook the books,' they 'hyped' the need to go to war, and they lied too often to count." What drove the policies of these government officials was not intelligence but sheer "dogma."

One especially dangerous consequence of an administration in the grip of ideological delusions, writes Immerman, is that it has rendered the benefits of intelligence reform almost completely nugatory. While the radical reorganization undertaken since September 11 might have been expected to produce "dramatic and positive" results, the fact is that "the effect on policy is likely to be slight so long as the makers of that policy remain cognitively impaired and politically possessed."

This is but a sampling of the scholarship of Professor Immerman. What are we to make of such Michael Moore-like thinking coming from the lips of a ranking U.S. intelligence official, the very official in charge of maintaining the "integrity and standards" of our intelligence community? And, more important, what does Mike McConnell make of it?

The problem is not merely that someone who is himself so clearly a "rabid ideologue" might have been responsible for vetting the Iran NIE and then letting a skewed declassified summary of it out the door. Given how recently Immerman took his job, his precise role in the fiasco is unclear, although it is suggestive that his direct supervisor is Thomas Fingar, one of the authors of the controversial document. The real problem is that someone like Immerman, nakedly contemptuous of the administration in which he nonetheless sought a job, was appointed to a position of such high responsibility—or any responsibility—in the first place. Who made that decision and why?

The Bush administration has been repeatedly condemned for politicizing intelligence. But the shoe is being tied on the wrong foot. The politicization of the intelligence community comes from within. Indeed, those responsible for maintaining analytic integrity are themselves generally lacking in the very quality. We can reform and reshuffle the intelligence community from now until kingdom come, but, as long as such types remain fixed in place, the politicization of intelligence will persist. ♦

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Cuba After Fidel

Can the society he ruined get back on its feet?

BY DUNCAN CURRIE

In January 1959, during the early days of the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro declared, "Behind me come others more radical than me." It was a reference to the hard-core Stalinists such as his younger brother, Raúl, and also a warning of what might ensue should Fidel be assassinated. Today, however, Raúl is thought to be the more pragmatic of the two Castros—more willing to liberalize the economy and to pursue normalized relations with the United States.

Despite what you may have read, the post-Fidel era did not begin last week when the dictator's retirement was made official. It began about 19 months ago, in the summer of 2006, when Fidel was hospitalized and the 76-year-old Raúl became Cuba's interim president. He has forged a collective leadership and preserved stability on the island. Raúl is likely to be "elected" president at the February 24 Cuban National Assembly gathering, though there has been some speculation that Carlos Lage, the 56-year-old vice president, might become the formal chief executive and that the younger Castro would keep a separate leadership title. The nature of a Raúl-led regime is shrouded by uncertainty. But the factors that will determine the future of post-Fidel Cuba, and of U.S. policy toward Cuba, are obvious.

¶ *The military*. Raúl has headed the Cuban military for decades. Brian Latell, who spent three decades following Cuba as a CIA officer, argued in his 2005 book, *After Fidel*, that "Raúl was his brother's one truly indispensable ally" and that his "brilliant, steady leadership of the Cuban armed forces secured the revolution." Post-Fidel Cuba has essentially been run by a civil-military committee and that won't soon change. "Civilian elites, individually or in any conceivable alliances, will be unable to challenge the military as long as it remains united," Latell wrote. "The Communist Party and popular organizations are hollow shells that have been allowed by the Castros to fade in importance." According to Jaime Suchlicki, a Cuba expert at the University of Miami, the Cuban military now "controls more than 50 percent of the economy," including a large portion of the tourism industry. They are the real power brokers.

Latell made another crucial point: A Tiananmen Square-type incident could cleave apart the military and topple the regime. "Even if the survival of the revolution were at stake, many troop commanders would probably be unwilling to fire indiscriminately on protesting civilians." If ordered to do so, some of the elite paramilitary forces might carry out a massacre, Latell added. "But that could be the surest formula for civil war, pitting loyalist and dissident commanders and units against each other."

¶ *China*. While Fidel has disavowed the Chinese economic model, Raúl is said to favor it. The *Wall Street Journal* reported in November 2006 that "Raúl has traveled to China a number of times to study Beijing's economic policies, and in 2003 he invited the leading economic adviser to China's then-premier Zhu Rongji, who played a leading role in opening up China to foreign trade and investment, to give a series of lectures in Cuba." Raúl also supported the modest free-market initiatives devised by Lage in the early 1990s.

China is cranking up its investment in Cuba and boosting bilateral ties. There seems little doubt that Cuba's new leaders will seek to borrow from the Chinese blueprint and mix political repression with expanded economic freedoms. But they will do so warily, and probably through piecemeal reforms (starting with agriculture).

¶ *Helms-Burton*. If Cuba embraced the Chinese model, would America scrap its embargo? The 1996 Helms-Burton Act stipulates that before the U.S. embargo can be lifted or diplomatic recognition granted, the Cuban government must not include Fidel or Raúl Castro, and it must meet a series of democratic benchmarks, such as legalizing all political activity, releasing all political prisoners, abolishing certain state security forces, and pledging to hold free elections. "It's an all-or-nothing approach," complains a former Bush administration official. "There's no room in U.S. policy for an incremental transition."

Peter Orr, a retired Foreign Service officer who served as Cuba coordinator at the U.S. Agency for International Development under President Clinton, disagrees. "There is nothing in Helms-Burton that impedes an incremental strategy," Orr told me via email. "Yes, the bar to formal diplomatic recognition and direct assistance to the Cuban government has been codified at a fairly high level that is not going to be met in the near term following Fidel Castro's demise. But the same Helms-Burton legislation authorized the president to take steps to promote democratic change in Cuba, including but not limited to providing assistance to the Cuban people and promoting information flows and people-to-people engagements that would further democratic change."

Even under Helms-Burton, "the president has a wide degree of discretion to make the determination of what constitutes a step that will promote democratic change"—and nothing bars U.S and Cuban officials from talking or negotiating.

¶ *Venezuela*. In recent years, Ven-

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GARY LOCKE

ezuelan president Hugo Chávez has lavished Cuba with petroleum largesse. In 2006, according to Jorge Piñón and his colleagues at the University of Miami's Cuba Transition Project, "the market value of Venezuela's crude oil and refined products exports to Cuba amounted to over $3.3 billion." In 2007, they reckon, Venezuelan oil subsidies to Cuba might well have eclipsed $4 billion.

Chávez and Fidel get on famously, but Raúl has remained more distant from the Venezuelan leader. "The bulk of evidence suggests that the two men have little in common and are more rivals than allies," notes Latell. Many Cuban military officers are said to be dismissive of the buffoonish Chávez and resentful of their dependence on Venezuelan oil. For that matter, Chávez has been weakened at home: He lost a December referendum on constitutional reform and has alienated many onetime supporters. If the future of Venezuelan aid to Cuba is uncertain, the consequences of its withdrawal are clearer. If Caracas withdrew those subsidies, says the former Bush administration official, "there would be a crisis [in Cuba] as big as the one that attended the fall of the Soviet Union."

¶ *Migration*. Once Fidel dies, "I don't think Raúl can keep it together," a senior Bush administration official told me late last year, noting that things could get "very bloody." Raúl has dodgy health, no charisma, and a reputation for brutality—not exactly the makings of a transformative figure. If the regime loses control and violence engulfs the island, it could spur a massive migration to Florida.

The 1980 Mariel boatlift brought around 125,000 Cubans to American shores; the 1994 *balsero* frenzy saw nearly 40,000 Cubans intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard. Any major post-Fidel instability could trigger another huge exodus. "It could be bigger than Mariel," Latell told me.

"I would like to think that a U.S. president would put promoting democratic change in Cuba above concerns about uncontrolled immigration, but I don't believe any administration in recent times has and I'm skeptical that even Fidel's death will change that," says Orr. "Even in the absence of gradual political change, economic progress in Cuba becomes imperative if an immigration crisis is to be avoided, if and when sudden political change occurs. This logic suggests that a successful implementation of the Chinese model in Cuba would serve U.S. interests of minimizing the risk of an illegal immigration crisis."

Fidel Castro's 49-year tyranny hasn't just ruined the Cuban economy; it has also ruined Cuban society, producing generations of Cubans who have learned to "succeed" in life by lying, spying, cheating, and stealing. Trying to fashion a market-oriented, democratic culture out of the wreckage of five decades of bloodstained totalitarianism will not be easy, no matter who is in charge.

If post-Fidel Cuba adopts the Chinese economic model, as expected, the lot of ordinary Cubans will improve. But the road to full-blown democracy will likely be slow, fitful, and deeply frustrating to Cubans on both sides of the Florida Strait, who have waited half a century for their homeland's long national nightmare to end. ♦

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Trading Places

The coalition party becomes the consensus party, and vice versa.

BY FRED BARNES

For decades, Democrats have been the coalition party. They brought together groups of people who differed on ideology and in social status. Republicans, at least since 1980, have been the consensus party. They rallied behind the standard positions of conservatism, differing only (and then mildly) on social issues.

In 2008, the parties have reversed roles. You merely have to watch a Democratic presidential debate to realize Democrats are now the consensus party. On everything that matters—Iraq, taxes, immigration, health care, the war on terrorism—Democrats basically agree. Their debates sound like an echo chamber.

In contrast, Republicans have become a party of squabbling ideological groups that John McCain must bring together if he is to win the presidency this fall. With McCain as their nominee—one with whom many conservatives have disagreements— Republicans have become the coalition party.

Oddly enough, this role reversal may help Republicans retain the White House in a year that, by most political yardsticks, favors Democrats. With McCain, Republicans have a presidential candidate less vulnerable to Democratic attacks than the Democratic nominee, especially if it's Barack Obama, is to Republican criticism.

In his brief political career, Obama has experienced the easy life. He's rated by the *National Journal* as the most liberal member of the Senate, but he's never had to defend his liberal views. Certainly in the 18 televised Democratic debates this year, including last week's Texas faceoff with Hillary Clinton, he hasn't. The debates have been liberal lovefests.

Hillary Clinton argues that she'd be a better Democratic nominee because she has been forced to deal with what she calls "the Republican attack machine," and he hasn't. She has a point. Perhaps Obama, if he's the Democratic nominee, will be able to dismiss Republican attacks as easily as he's brushed off Clinton's criticism of him on minor points and peripheral issues. But I doubt it.

Obama has barely had to respond to Clinton at all, since their disagreements are so trivial. She says some of his words are "change you can Xerox" because he plagiarized a tiny portion of his stump speech. His answer in last week's debate was, "C'mon." That won't suffice when McCain insists Obama's plan for Iraq would amount to pulling defeat out of the jaws of victory.

Iraq is an example of a major issue that Obama has not been forced to think through because of the Democratic party's consensus. He has made no adjustment for the success of the surge in Iraq, scarcely even acknowledging that the violence-wracked, politically polarized country of a year ago is no longer the Iraq of today.

The surge isn't a problem for McCain. Getting Republicans to coalesce around him is. Since Ronald Reagan was the party's presidential candidate in 1980, Republicans have lined up reflexively behind their usually conservative nominee. But McCain is anything but a reliable conservative.

So he must, first, attract strong conservatives, including the talk radio hosts who've often zinged him for being insufficiently conservative. McCain has little margin for error. He needs to win the overwhelming backing of social and religious conservatives, too. He must attract the relatively small contingent who've supported Ron Paul to prevent Paul from running as a third party libertarian candidate for president. (Paul says he has no plans to do this.)

It took no effort for McCain to round up Republican moderates. He's their guy. And he's gotten the George Bush wing with endorsements from Jeb and the elder George.

Conservatives may not admit it, but their failure to nominate one of their own may turn out to be a godsend in 2008. It's precisely the things they don't like about McCain—things I'm not crazy about either—that make him a tough target for Democrats: torture, Guantánamo, global warming, guns, stem cells.

Then there's bipartisanship or, as Obama puts it, bringing us together. This is the core of Obama's appeal. It allows him to campaign not from his ideological home on the left but from somewhere above the fray, somewhere in the heavens.

McCain, alone among Republicans, can bring him back to earth. Obama talks about crossing the partisan aisle and ending polarization, but he's never done it in any serious way. McCain specializes in it—one more thing infuriating many Republicans. He's joined with Democrats on campaign finance reform, immigration, global warming, judicial nominations, and a lot more.

Imagine a presidential debate this fall between McCain and Obama, the coalition candidate versus the consensus candidate. McCain, for sure, would skewer him on national security, the war on terrorism, taxes, and spending. Would Obama dare invoke his signature response and claim McCain is being divisive and partisan and we must rise above such disagreements? If he did, would it work? ♦

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Six Things We Don't Know

In which a prognosticator surveys the landscape of campaign '08 and raises the white flag of surrender

By Noemie Emery

1 *John McCain*: Does his appeal to independents, centrists, and Lieberman Democrats outweigh the ennui, nausea, and revulsion he evokes among those on the right of the right? In a sense, this is a row between conservatives who are politicians, and concerned with assembling a center-right coalition they can use to wield power, and movement conservatives who are theoreticians and see the coalition as a vessel to contain their ideas. The first camp are mainly in Congress, the second on the radio and online. When the latter realized after the Florida primary that McCain might become head of the party, it set off a week of ferocious assaults; some struck a pose like that of Rebecca in *Ivanhoe*, and threatened to throw themselves over the parapet rather than submit to the stranger's embrace. Damage control was commenced by McCain allies such as Tom Coburn, Sam Brownback, Jack Kemp, and George Allen, who have strong ties to movement conservatives.

The results of Super Tuesday, which McCain won in the face of an all-out assault from the right, suggested that while movement leaders may be in touch with their base, the base itself is only part of a large coalition. Yet in a country this size, even a niche movement can account for millions of voters, and in close elections every vote counts. If some people don't vote, the states in which they don't vote could be important: A poll done by SurveyUSA in 2007 showed both McCain and Giuliani falling below the Bush totals in some red states (though not by enough to lose), but doing better than Bush in blue states and swing states, the latter of which they might win. Low blows from the left, like the *New York Times*'s muckraking last week, not to mention Democratic attempts to define McCain as a right winger, may be just the thing he needs. Nothing arouses the right like the enmity of the left. Will it be enough to compensate for McCain's enthusiasm gap with conservatives? This is one thing we don't know.

Noemie Emery, a Weekly Standard *contributing editor, is author most recently of* Great Expectations: The Troubled Lives of Political Families.

2 *The Democrats*: If Republicans seem to be pulling back from the brink of intraparty war, Democrats are still on the edge of one. The party that has lived, and more frequently died, by identity politics now has its dream candidates: the first credible black and the first credible female candidate for the world's most powerful office. But the nightmare is they are running against one another. Barack Obama has shown an uncanny talent for exposing the seamier side of the Clintons, the memory of which had faded since they left the White House. He lured Bill Clinton down from the pedestal he was trying to ascend as revered elder statesman and left him floundering in the muck of race-tinged innuendoes, issuing red-faced tirades that turned much of the public against him and earned him a scolding from party grandees.

If the convention arrives without a numerical winner, as still appears plausible, the loathing between the two candidates, and the polarization of their main backers, could lead to an ugly row. "Clinton and Obama have split the Democrats into rival tribes—blacks versus Latinos, young versus old, upscale versus downscale, Kennedys versus Clintons," Michael Barone tells us. The best case scenario for the Democrats at the start of the year was that Hillary would sweep to an unopposed coronation, leaving a unified party thrilled with its chance to make

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The loathing between the two candidates, and the polarization of their main backers, could still lead to an ugly row.

ETHAN MILLER / GETTY IMAGES

history. Now the best case is that Obama is able to sweep her away, seduce her most loyal followers, and emerge at the head of a more or less unified party, thrilled with its chance to make even more history. The worst-case scenario is a comeback in Texas and Ohio that allows her to go staggering on, slashing away every day at her rival, holding him below the number of delegates needed, and fighting to the bitter end at the August convention, at which point there will be blood on the furniture. How long will she last, and how low will she take this? This is a key thing we don't know.

3 *Barack Obama*: What goes up must come down, but the Obama balloon has so far defied gravity. Will it still be going up in November? If it falls, will there be a swift collapse, a slow deflation, or just a soft, gentle hissing? So far, his rise is beyond precedent: The two charismatic presidents of the postwar era, Reagan and Kennedy, were canonized in retrospect. Nobody seemed to pass out at their rallies, and they each had a great deal more substance behind them: Reagan, the two-term governor of one of the largest states in the union, and an established conservative spokesman; Kennedy, a 13-year member of the House and the Senate, with a long-standing interest in foreign affairs. The strongest Obama parallels come up in other primary campaigns, and then always with people who lost—with Clean Gene McCarthy and Robert F. Kennedy, who ran against each other in 1968 (until Bobby was murdered); with Gary Hart in 1984, who lost to the über-prosaic Walter F. Mondale; and with Howard Dean in the 2004 cycle, who lost to the very pedestrian John Kerry after the misfortune of being endorsed by Al Gore.

On the plus side for Obama is the fact that his ascent has gone on longer than all of the others; that his low-key appeal is in the style of Reagan and Kennedy, and more durable than the louder variety of charm; that his base is broader than that of most Democratic insurgents, as he links upscale whites to minority voters; and that he is feeding off of a seemingly bottomless urge for civility, after decades of partisan wars. On the minus side is the fact that he shows little substance—there isn't much mention of

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what he would change to—and that his call for bipartisanship in governing is at odds with his orthodox liberal record, giving no sign of what—if anything—he and the opposite party could compromise on. One sign of trouble is that he has never been seriously challenged by anyone to his right (Alan Keyes does not count). Another is the gap between his soaring and infinite promise and his less than original program.

In the end, Reagan and Kennedy were about winning the Cold War, which is how they defined themselves; and their most famous speeches concerned the advancement and value of liberty. Obama defines himself by his personality. "The message is becoming dangerously self-referential," writes Joe Klein, who notes that the Obama campaign is all too often about how terrific the Obama campaign has been. "Obama's people are so taken with their Messiah that they'll soon be selling flowers at airports and arranging mass weddings," writes David Brooks—who admires him. With Chris Matthews noting that he gets a "thrill up my leg" listening to Obama give one of his speeches, the whole thing verges on parody that may not go over well with Middle America. Middle America has been also ticked off by Michelle Obama, whose comment that she is "proud of her country" for the first time in her adult life because her husband "has done well" shows a trace of the insularity that lost 49 states for McGovern and Mondale, as well as a very tin ear. This is the sort of thing that results in small tears in the fabric, through which small currents of air may shortly be hissing. Thus could happen tomorrow, it could happen in August, it could happen in the first week of November, or it just might not happen. This is still one more thing we don't know.

The media can no longer play their theme of Iraq as Vietnam.

PHOTOS: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

4 *Iraq*: Iraq has been missing in action since last September, when things there began going better, and the visit to Capitol Hill by General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker did not turn out the way their Democratic hosts had planned. This means Iraq is now largely ignored: by the press, which has neither the heart nor the narrative skills to absorb this development; by the Democrats, who no longer see the war as something that cuts in their favor; and by those Republicans who were never too thrilled by the subject, and are still afraid it will all go wrong.

The rule has been bad news, followed by no news. But now that John McCain has emerged as the Republican nominee, this pattern may finally change. Mainstream coverage of Iraq since the surge started succeeding has consisted of silence punctuated with stories of soldier atrocities, Blackwater scandals, and the occasional suicide bomb. McCain, who said we were losing when we were losing, and backed a surge long before Bush did, may be the one man both willing and able to speak credibly of the American successes in Iraq; such as the fact that American soldiers have accomplished amazing things in Iraq over the past year; that al Qaeda is on the ropes; that Americans are embraced by Iraqis as allies and partners; that reconciliation among Iraq's warring factions is finally taking place. By placing Iraq front and center, McCain can accomplish two things: He can bring attention to the facts that no longer appear on the 6:30 news or the cover of *Newsweek*, which would happily showcase the bad news, if any. And, perhaps more important, he can slip these facts into a narrative framework that so far has been missing, and may be the thing needed to carry the day.

Through 2006 and into the fall of 2007, the media were working the theme of Iraq-as-Vietnam, in which a dim Texas president, in over his head, founders in a quagmire while ignoring the advice of the press and the establishment—a theme that was dropped as it became

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inconveniently far from the truth, when the dim Texas president (backed by McCain and Joe Lieberman), bucked the press and the establishment to come up at last with a successful military strategy, a story the press and establishment for obvious reasons are not eager to tell. A presidential campaign with its national megaphone is the one venue left with the power to blast through the media's silence; the press can ignore or downplay things being done on the other side of the planet, but not speeches made by a national candidate, before a large audience, day after day for eight months.

Democrats say opinion on Iraq and the war has been set in concrete, and can no longer be altered. McCain's best bet is that Americans dislike the war less than the idea of losing it, and that they will be responsive to good news. Polls show public opinion is highly ambivalent about Iraq, and not quite as one-sided as Democrats think. A Gallup poll released February 18 shows that 60 percent of the public still feels that the war was not worth it. But only 18 percent want to withdraw the troops now, as Hillary and Obama seem to be promising, while 39 percent support McCain's position (stay in Iraq until things get better), and 37 percent want a timetable for a phased withdrawal. Forty-three percent think the surge has improved things, while 35 percent say it has not made a difference, and 21 percent—nearly all Democrats—believe it has made things there worse. (The number of people who think the surge has been working has doubled since July of last year.) Other polls show that 28 percent think a Republican president would handle Iraq better, 34 percent say a Democrat, while 20 percent think both parties would handle it equally poorly or well. On the other hand, McCain himself has a 20-plus point lead over Obama and Hillary in handling terror, and a 14-point lead over both Obama and Hillary in being able to handle Iraq. In other words, this nominee has a singular lead over both of the Democrats in addressing Iraq, and the next appearance before Congress of General David Petraeus could give him his opening, just as the success of the surge over the winter brought him back from his political near-death experience. Can he bring it off? It may be too late, but some months ago no one believed that the surge would work, or that McCain would be viable. This is one more thing we do not know.

5 *The economy*. This is something over which none of the candidates has any control, a wild card that will probably hurt Republicans, the incumbent party in the White House, should things really head south. On the other hand, judging by past experience, the mailing of stimulus checks in May will probably be a sign that the worst is already behind us. How will it look by late October? And if it's bad, whose plans will appear more credible? That's one more thing we don't know.

6 *The unforeseen unforeseen* (with a nod to Donald Rumsfeld): Beyond the things we expect to be unexpected are the true unpredictables, the things that can change or blow up without warning, such as last week's *Times* attack on McCain. Mitt Romney remade himself as a social conservative, planning to run on the right uncontested, while John McCain and Rudy Giuliani fought over the same pool of votes. Instead, he split votes with Mike Huckabee, whom he never saw coming. "Romney the buttoned down businessman had planned for every contingency except one," writes Tom Bevan of *Real Clear Politics*. "The exceptionally gifted speaker with the Mayberry charm proved to be the kryptonite to Romney's well oiled, deep pocketed, campaign." Kryptonite, did you say? Ask Hillary Clinton, now floored and flailing, against the one threat she never foresaw. She had planned for years—perhaps since Yale Law School—to emerge as the undisputed queen bee of her party, and, when attractive centrists like Evan Bayh and Mark Warner bowed out early, the game looked over. The last thing she expected was Barack Obama, who came at her at once from the left, right, and center, who could trump her gender card with his race one, and whose youth and genial nature seemed to immunize him from the Clintons' favorite modes of attack.

And so we can say now with deep and utter assurance that John McCain and his critics will make up completely, make up part way, or snipe at each other from here to November; that Obama and Clinton will make up, if not kiss, or battle each other and fracture their party; that Obama will burn out or melt down or else ride a wave to the White House; that Iraq will help the Democrats, help the Republicans, or become a non-issue; that the economy will improve, collapse, or stumble along in a middling manner; and that stunning and unforeseen developments will or will not occur. Please bear in mind that all of these things are as likely to happen as all of the others, and that until some of them do, no one will have a clue what will happen. Please make no bets until things become clearer. These are the Things We Don't Know. ♦

AP PHOTO / DAVID ZALUBOWSKI

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Feminism and the English Language

Can the damage to our mother tongue be undone?

By David Gelernter

How can I teach my students to write decently when the English language has become a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Academic-Industrial Complex? Our language used to belong to all its speakers and readers and writers. But in the 1970s and '80s, arrogant ideologues began recasting English into heavy artillery to defend the borders of the New Feminist state. In consequence we have all got used to sentences where puffed-up words like "chairperson" and "humankind" strut and preen, where *he-or-she*'s keep bashing into surrounding phrases like bumper cars and related deformities blossom like blisters; they are all markers of an epoch-making victory of propaganda over common sense.

We have allowed ideologues to pocket a priceless property and walk away with it. Today, as college students and full-fledged young English teachers emerge from the feminist incubator in which they have spent their whole lives, this victory of brainless ideology is on the brink of becoming institutionalized. If we mean to put things right, we can't wait much longer.

Our ability to write and read good, clear English connects us to one another and to our common past. The prime rule of writing is to keep it simple, concrete, concise. Shakespeare's most perfect phrases are miraculously simple and terse. ("Thou art the thing itself." "A plague o' both your houses." "Can one desire too much of a good thing?") The young Jane Austen is praised by her descendants for having written "pure simple English." Meanwhile, in everyday prose, a word with useless syllables or a sentence with useless words is a house fancied-up with fake dormers and chimneys. It is ugly and boring and cheap, and impossible to take seriously.

But our problem goes deeper than a few silly words and many tedious sentences. How can I (how can any teacher) get students to take the prime rule seriously when virtually the whole educational establishment teaches the opposite? When students have been ordered since first grade to put "he or she" in spots where "he" would mean exactly the same thing, and "firefighter" where "fireman" would mean exactly the same thing? How can we then tell them, "Make every word, every syllable count!" They may be ignorant but they're not stupid. The well-aimed torpedo of Feminist English has sunk the whole process of teaching students to write. The small minority of born writers will always get by, inventing their own rules as they go. But we used to expect every educated citizen to write decently—and that goal is out the window.

"He or she" is the proud marshal of this pathetic parade. It has generated a cascading series of problems in which the Establishment, having noticed that Officially Approved gender-neutral sentences sound rotten, has dreamt up alternatives that are even worse. So let's consider "he or she." In some cases the awfulness of a feminist phrase requires several paragraphs to investigate systematically. Such investigations are worth pursuing nonetheless; our language is at stake.

When the style-smashers first announced, decades ago, that the neutral "he" meant "male" and excluded "female," they were lying and knew it. After all, when a critic like Mary Lascelles writes (in her classic 1939 study of Jane Austen) that "no reader can vouch for more than his own experience," one can hardly accuse her of envisioning male readers only. In feminist minds ideology excused the lie, and the goal of interchangeable sexes was a far greater good than decent English. Even today's English professors have heard (I suppose) of Eudora Welty, who wrote in her 1984 memoirs—just as the feminist anti-English campaign was nearing total

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victory—that every story writer imagines himself inside his characters; "it is his first step, and his last too." Was the author demonstrating her inability to write proper English? Or merely letting us know that there is no such thing as a female writer?

E.B. White was our greatest modern source of the purest, freshest, clearest, most bracing English, straight from a magic spring that bubbled for him alone. With A.J. Liebling and Joseph Mitchell, he was one of a triumvirate that made the *New Yorker* under its great editor Harold Ross a thing of beauty and a joy forever. The *Elements of Style*, White's revision of a short textbook by his Cornell professor William Strunk, is justly revered as the best thing of its kind. In the third edition (1979), White lays down the law on the he-or-she epidemic that was sweeping the country like a bad flu (or a bad joke).

> The use of *he* as a pronoun for nouns embracing both genders is a simple, practical convention rooted in the beginnings of the English language. *He* has lost all suggestion of maleness in these circumstances. The word was unquestionably biased to begin with (the dominant male), but after hundreds of years it has become seemingly indispensable. It has no pejorative connotations; it is never incorrect.

(Warning: White died in 1985; a later edition of *Elements* published after his death is a disgrace to his memory.) In his 1984 White biography, Scott Elledge tells a remarkable story about "he or she":

> *The New Yorker* rejected [in 1971] a parable White had written about the campaign of feminists to abolish the use of the pronoun *his* to mean "his or her." He told Roger Angell [his wife's son by a previous marriage] that he was "surprised, but not downhearted, that the piece got sunk. . . . To me, any woman's (or man's) attempt to remove the gender from the language is both funny and futile."

For the *New Yorker* to have rejected a piece by White, its darling and its hero, the man who did more than anyone but Ross himself to make the magazine the runaway, roaring success it became, and (by the way) a thoroughgoing liberal, was a sure sign that feminism had already got America in a chokehold.

The fixed idea forced by language rapists upon a whole generation of students, that "he" can refer only to a male, is (in short) wrong. It is applied with nonsensical inconsistency, too. The same feminist warriors who would never write "he" where "he or she" will do would *also* never write "the author or authoress" where "the author" will do. They hate such words as actress and waitress; in these cases they insist that the masculine form be used for men *and* women. You would never find my feminist colleagues writing a phrase such as, "When an Anglican priest or priestess mounts the pulpit . . . " You *will* find them writing, "When an Anglican priest mounts the pulpit, he or she is about to address the congregation." Logic has never been a strong suit among the commissar-intellectuals who have bossed American culture since the 1970s. True, "he" sounds explicitly masculine in a way "priest" doesn't, to those who are just learning the language. Children also find it odd that "enough" should be spelled that way, that New York should be at the same latitude as Spain, that 7 squared is 49, and so on. Education was invented to set people straight on all these fine points.

True, 'he' sounds masculine to those who are just learning the language. Children also find it odd that "enough" should be spelled that way, that New York should be at the same latitude as Spain, that 7 squared is 49. Education was invented to set people straight on all these fine points.

He-or-she'ing added so much ugly dead weight to the language that even the Establishment couldn't help noticing. So feminist authorities went back to the drawing board. Unsatisfied with having rammed their 80-ton 16-wheeler into the nimble sports-car of English style, they proceeded to shoot the legs out from under grammar—which collapsed in a heap after agreement between subject and pronoun was declared to be optional. "When an Anglican priest mounts the pulpit, they are about to address the congregation." How many of today's high school English teachers would mark this sentence wrong, or even "awkward"? (Show of hands? Not one?) Yet such sentences skreak like fingernails on a blackboard.

Slashes are just as bad. He/she is about to address the congregation" is unacceptable because it's not clear how to pronounce it: "he she," "he or she," "he slash she"? The unclarity is a nuisance, and each possibility sounds awful. Writing English is like writing music: One lays down the footprints of sounds that are recreated in each reader's mind. To be deaf to English is like being deaf to birdsong or laughter or rustling trees or babbling

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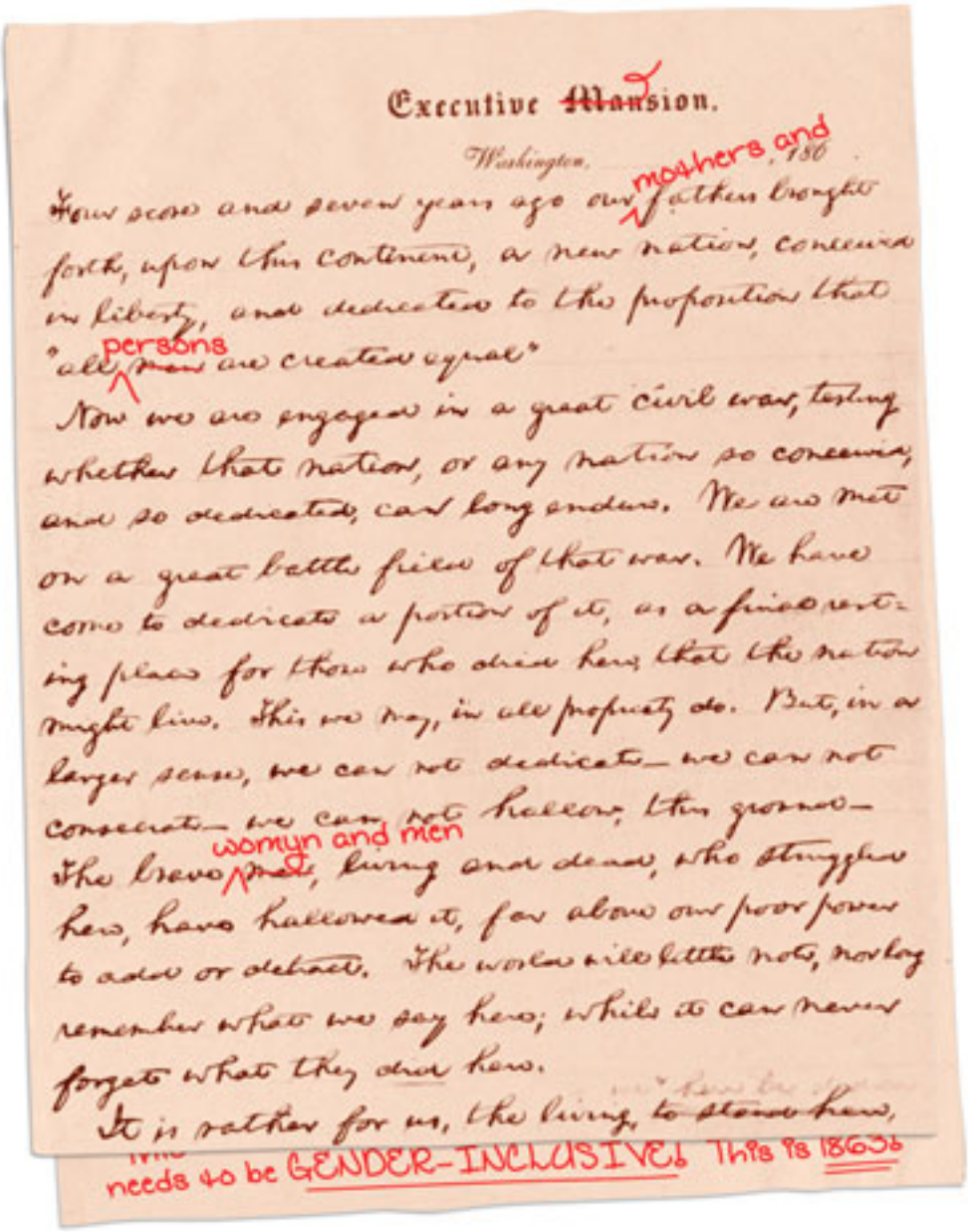
brooks—only worse, because English is the communal, emotional, and intellectual net that holds this nation together, if anything can. Occasionally one sees "s/he," which shows not indifference but outright contempt for the language and the reader.

And it gets worse. At the bottom of this junkpile is a maneuver that seems to be growing in popularity, at least among college students: writing "she" instead of neutral "he," or interchanging "he" and "she" at random. This grotesque outcome follows naturally from the primordial lie. If you make students believe that "he" can refer only to a male, then writers who use "he" in sentences referring to men and women are *actually* discussing males only and excluding females—and might just as well use "she" and exclude males, leaving the reader to sort things out for himself. The she-sentences that result tend to slam on a reader's brakes and send him smash-and-spinning into the roadside underbrush, cursing under his breath. (I still remember the first time I encountered such a sentence, in an early-1980s book by a noted historian about a Jesuit in Asia.)

Here is the problem with the dreaded she-sentence. Ideologues can lie themselves blue in the face without changing the fact that, to those who know modern English as it existed until the cultural revolution and still does exist in many quarters, the neutral he "has lost all suggestion of maleness." But there is no such thing as a neutral "she"; even feminists don't claim there is.

"The driver turns on his headlights" is not about a male or female person; it is about a *driving* person. But "the driver turns on her headlights" is a sentence about a *female* driver. Just as any competent reader listens to what he is reading, he pictures it too (if it *can* be pictured); hearing and imagining the written word are ingrained habits. A reader who had thought the topic was drivers is now faced by a specifically *female* driver, and naturally wonders why. What is the writer getting at? To distract your reader for political purposes, to trip him up merely to demonstrate your praiseworthy right-thinkingness, is a low trick.

White's comment: "If you think *she* is a handy substitute for *he*, try it and see what happens."



Executive ~~Mansion~~.

Washington, 180

Four score and seven years ago our mothers and fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that "all ~~men~~ persons are created equal"

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of it, as a final resting place for those who died here that the nation might live. This we may, in all propriety do. But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow, this ground—The brave womyn and men ~~men~~, living and dead, who struggled here, have hallowed it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here; while it can never forget what they did here.

It is rather for us, the living, ~~to stand here~~, who needs to be GENDER-INCLUSIVE! This is 1863!

Sometimes a writer can avoid plastering his prose with feminist bumper-stickers and still not provoke the running dogs of the Establishment by diving into the plural whenever danger threatens. ("Drivers turn on their headlights.") White's comment:

Alternatively, put all controversial nouns in the plural

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and avoid the choice of sex altogether, and you may find your prose sounding general and diffuse as a result.

But the real problem goes deeper. Why should I worry about feminist ideology while I write? Why should I worry about anyone's ideology? Writing is a tricky business that requires one's whole concentration, as any professional will tell you; as no doubt you know anyway. Who can afford to allow a virtual feminist to elbow her way like a noisy drunk into that inner mental circle where all your faculties (such as they are) are laboring to produce decent prose? Bargaining over the next word, shaping each phrase, netting and vetting the countless images that drift through the mind like butterflies in a summer garden, mounting some and releasing others—and keeping the trajectory and target always in mind?

Throw the bum out.

It's a disgrace that we graduate class after class of young Americans who will never be able to write down their thoughts effectively—in a business report, a letter of application or recommendation, a postcard or email, or any other form. Our one consolation is that the country is filling up gradually with people who have been reared on ugly, childish writing and will never expect anything else. But the implications of our spineless surrender go deeper. We have accepted, implicitly, a hit-and-run vandalizing of English—the richest, most expressive language in the world. Languages such as French are shaped and guided by official boards of big shots. But English used to be a language of the people, by the people, for the people. "The living language is like a cowpath," wrote White; "it is the creation of the cows themselves, who, having created it, follow it or depart from it according to their whims or their needs." We have allowed our academic overlords to plow up White's cow-path and replace it with a steel-and-concrete highway, hemmed in by guardrails and heavily patrolled by police.

Of course all languages change. A feminist might say that he-or-she is merely the latest twist in our ever-changing cowpath; that he-or-she was the will of the people. But this too is a lie, and in fairness to my opponents I have never heard them deploy it. They know that Americans of the late 1960s were not struck en masse by sudden unhappiness over the neutral he or the word "chairman." Such complaints never did rank high on the average American's list of worries. (Way back in the 1970s, "chairperson" was in fact a one-word joke: an object lesson in the ludicrous places you would reach if you took Feminist English seriously.) In fact the New English was deliberately created and pounded into children's heads by an intellectual elite asserting its control over American culture. The same conclusion follows independently from a language's well-established tendency to simplify and compress its existing structure (like a settling seabed) to make room for constantly arriving new coinages. Words like "authoress" would almost certainly have disappeared with no help from feminists. But "he" transforming itself into "he or she" is like a ball rolling uphill. It doesn't happen unless someone has volunteered to push.

A feminist might say that he-or-she was the will of the people. But this too is a lie, and in fairness to my opponents I have never heard them deploy it. They know that Americans were not struck en masse by sudden unhappiness over the neutral he or the word "chairman."

The depressing trail continues one last mile. What happens to a nation's thinking when you ban such phrases as "great men"? The alternatives are so bad—"great person" sounds silly; "great human being" is a casual tribute to a friend—that it's hard to know where to turn. "Hero" doesn't work; "Wittgenstein was a great man" is a self-sufficient assertion, but "Wittgenstein was a hero" is not. Was he a war hero, a philosophical hero? (Yes and yes.) "Wittgenstein was a great heart" (also true) can't be rephrased in hero-speak, and can't substitute for "great man" either.

We happen to know also that the *idea* of "great men" has been bounced right out of education at every level. Nowadays students are taught to admire celebrities and money instead. We might well have misplaced the "great man" idea anyway, but losing the phrase didn't help. Civilization copes poorly with ideas that have no names.

And what should we say instead of "brotherhood"? "Crown thy good with siblinghood"? "Tolerance" is no substitute for "brotherhood"; it's passive and bland where "brotherhood" is active and inspiring. "Brotherhood" has accordingly been quietly stricken from the list of good things to which Americans should aspire.

We allowed ideologues to wreck the English language. Do we have the courage to rebuild? ♦

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'Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus' by J.M.W. Turner (1829)

NATIONAL GALLERY COLLECTION / CORBIS

Greek Bearing Gifts

Homer, whoever he was, still speaks to us. BY DAVID WHARTON

How to take account of Homer's influence in the world? *To count them all, demands a thousand tongues / A throat of brass, and adamantine lungs*, wrote the poet himself about naming all the troops who fought at Troy. The sentiment applies equally to Alberto Manguel's task here.

A full account would produce a small library, since Homer was the *Primum Mobile* of Greco-Roman culture. The Greeks' desire to preserve Homeric poetry might have been what drove them to adopt their alphabet; once preserved, he turns up everywhere. Tragedians plundered him for plots, historians mined him for data, and artists put Homeric images on all kinds of public and domestic art. Even the philosophers quote him constantly, especially Plato, whose famously conflicted relationship with Homer made him propose that poets be lavishly honored, then kicked out of his Republic.

Plato was afraid that Homer's "bewitching" power would corrupt the citizens, and he was probably arguing from personal experience. Rhapsodes, the professional singers of Homer's poems, got rich and famous performing them, some achieving near-rock-star status. Imagine a world in which people believed you could heal the sick or curse your enemies by chanting Homeric verses and you get some sense of his cultural preeminence.

Homer's the Iliad and the Odyssey
A Biography
by Alberto Manguel
Atlantic Monthly, 288 pp., $19.95

Later, when the conquering Romans were conquered by Greek culture, Homer led the charge. The first work of Roman poetry was Livius Andronicus's Latin translation of the *Odyssey*, and Latin epics in the Homeric mode remained a dominating force in Roman culture throughout its history.

Even though the rise of Christian Latin culture attenuated Homer's influence in the West, literate Christians had a hard time letting go, and Homer continued to have at least iconic force for writers and artists in the European Middle Ages, even though knowledge of Greek had all but disappeared. Thus, Dante places Homer among the blessed pagan poets in the *Inferno* (though he had not read him) and Homeric tales made their way circuitously into medieval romances, Chaucer, and Shakespeare. Post-Renaissance, Homer's fortunes waxed again and have never completely waned.

From this mass of material Alberto Manguel has made almost always inter-

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esting selections, giving us a brief and densely allusive character sketch rather than a full "biography" of the poems. The breadth of his readings in English, German, French, and Italian is immense, and as a famous reader—he is the author of *A History of Reading* and *A Reading Diary*—Manguel is suited to his task. He traces Homeric influence into unexpected places, such as in English folktales, or Racine's Jansenism, or garbled Arabic retellings of the Trojan War. He sketches a quick outline of the birth of Homeric scholarship as an academic discipline, touches on the archaeology of Troy, and even dips lightly into recent technical work on methods of oral composition that built up the Homeric poetic tradition.

Manguel's most abiding interest is Homer's reception and influence among other poets and writers, from Tyrtaeus of Sparta to Derek Walcott. And it is in recording the reactions to Homer in writers as diverse as Horace, Augustine, Vico, Goethe, Freud, and scores of others that Manguel does his greatest service, because he allows us to listen in as some of our acutest minds converse about our greatest poet.

But if Manguel's brief survey is broad, it should come as no surprise that it is not deep. We get only a taste of most reactions to Homer, and Manguel's own assessments are only glancing. Chapters often slide in puzzling directions: Why, for example, discuss Homeric epithets and similes in the chapter devoted to Homer's reception among the English Romantics? Manguel is also occasionally wrong or misleading, for example quoting A.E. Houseman as saying that a literary critic should have "a head, and not a pumpkin" on his shoulders. Good advice. But Houseman actually wrote that about *textual* criticism, the arcane art of sifting a reliable classical text out of medieval manuscripts.

Sometimes Manguel misreads Homer himself, as when he asserts that the seer Tiresias predicts that Odysseus will die on one last journey. But Tiresias actually predicts that Odysseus will die "far from the sea, in a sleek old age, with his people dwelling about him."

These, however, are minor matters: On the whole, Manguel's volume is a delicious smorgasbord of Homerica that only occasionally needs a grain of salt.

He shows us that Homer has an illustrious past, but does he have a future? After all, Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath famously declared him dead in *Who Killed Homer?* and blamed pedantic and politically correct classics scholars for killing him. But the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are constantly taught in high schools and colleges. And even when the poems are taught by pedants or theory-besotted graduate students, the poems themselves are so good that they often overcome their worst teachers. (Most students don't pay much attention to their teachers' pet ideas, but they are often enchanted by the drama and adventure of Homer. I recently asked 150 undergraduates who had just read the *Odyssey* to give me, anonymously, their candid opinions about it. All but one liked it, for a very wide variety of reasons. The one who didn't said that it "lacked an epic feel." Hmmm.)

The fact that Wolfgang Petersen's unintentionally campy movie *Troy* grossed nearly half-a-billion dollars worldwide in 2004 shows that Homer still has legs: He was not quite as popular that year as Jesus in *The Passion of the Christ*, but he beat out Michael Moore in *Fahrenheit 9/11*. And Achilles' Facebook groups—one is called "Achilles Could Definitely Take Chuck Norris"—show that Homer continues to have at least lowbrow appeal, as he always has (remember those rhapsodes).

It shouldn't be surprising that Homer's poems are so durable, if you consider the way they were produced. We don't know who Homer was, or even whether there ever was a single poet by that name; but we do know that the epics ascribed to him were the product of a half-millennium of continuous oral composition and refinement by singers in Greece and Ionia. That means that the poetry of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had been more focus-grouped than any body of poetic art, even before they achieved written form.

The stories that survived that winnowing of necessity have broad appeal. Children are enthralled by Odysseus's adventures with bizarre monsters; warriors are drawn to the violence of the Trojan battlefield; sentimentalists like the affair of Helen and Paris, or the tragic marital love of Hector and Andromache. Feminists, ancient and modern, are attracted to the clever ways that Penelope exercises sexual power over the suitors, and to the whiffs of a prehistoric matriarchy in the poems. (Why, after all, do the suitors think they have to marry Penelope in order to become king?) And entrepreneurial types like Odysseus's indomitable spirit and problem-solving techniques. I'm frankly surprised that someone hasn't yet written *Journey to Success: Solving Business Problems the Odysseus Way*.

But the appeal of the poems has always been more than simply popular. Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* pose stark existential questions and explore them with an unflinching gaze. Achilles's withdrawal from battle in the *Iliad* precipitates a frank search for the meaning of his life, and he pitilessly questions the values of the honor/shame culture that drives him and his companions. We last see him as an embittered ghost, telling Odysseus it's better to be a living ploughman than a glorious but dead king.

The *Odyssey*, too, asserts the deep value of living a human life. Odysseus, offered the possibility of blissful immortality with the goddess Calypso, is inexorably drawn to return to his home, his son, and his wife. Homer presents us with no transcendent values, but he does celebrate this-world, human ones: the value of achieving excellence, and the value of love—of husband and wife, of father and son, and of one friend for another. Achilles, like most soldiers before and since Troy, finally faced battle not for some glorious, abstract cause, but out of intense devotion to a brother in arms.

At a time when the value of living an earthly life is under attack by violent, death-loving and suicidal religious totalitarians, when a twisted honor/shame culture drives fathers and brothers to murder their daughters and sisters because of perceived violations of family honor, we could do worse than to contemplate with Achilles and Odysseus—the founders of our own culture—what makes this life worth living. ♦

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Miami vs. Colorado, Orange Bowl, September 24, 2005

DAVID BERGMAN / CORBIS

Agony of Defeat

Division I beats scholarship. **BY ROBERT WHITCOMB**

William Dowling, professor of English at Rutgers, seems to be an angry man who has, willingly or not, transformed his public persona from literary scholar to a national leader in the still-losing war against the commercialization of college sports. He notes that he edited the Dartmouth humor magazine (where I, too, briefly toiled) in the last two years of his undergraduate career, but there is little lightness here, if from time to time a bit of mordant humor.

It is, mostly, a well-argued diatribe, and a very useful one—perhaps the best overview of college-sports corruption published. It should be required reading for education and sports writers, not to mention high school students pondering their college choices along with their financially fearful parents.

Robert Whitcomb is editor of the editorial pages at the Providence Journal.

Confessions of a Spoilsport
My Life and Hard Times Fighting Sports Corruption at an Old Eastern University
by William C. Dowling
Penn State, 208 pp., $23.95

The narrative spine is the effort by Professor Dowling, other Rutgers scholars, and bright and brave students in a group called Rutgers 1000, to try to stem the state university of New Jersey's slide into big-time college-sports corruption and associated academic mediocrity after this distinguished institution joined the Big East conference in 1994 and jettisoned much of the old-fashioned sports amateurism that it had when the school, chartered in 1766, competed with the likes of Princeton.

Professor Dowling, it should be emphasized, does not dislike sports; he is an avid supporter of such old-fashioned, non-athletic-scholarship sportsmen as the Rutgers lightweight crew, and speaks fondly of attending Ivy League football games in the 1960s.

Rutgers 1000, the group he helped form to fight the takeover of the university by Division I sports, fights a valiant battle, seems to win, and then loses as mammon and media triumph—for now, anyway. But that they fought such a good, gutsy fight gives hope to others. Meanwhile, their story reads like a pretty good novel, in which of course William Dowling is the valiant defender of Western Civilization against the forces of proud ignorance, thuggery, exhibitionism, and greed.

Real life, even on Division I campuses, is a tad more complicated than that. But the fact is that college sports has, at many campuses, become a particularly obscene reflection of the worst of American materialism, libertinism, and celebrity-chasing. And so powerful has become the practice of hiring semi-professional, some soon-to-become *professional*, athletes to play on such teams, particularly the biggies (football and basketball), that their very role as centers of intellectual life must be challenged.

Dowling goes into the sordid detail of Division I universities recruiting virtual illiterates to play on their teams. To help hire and keep them, these institutions offer prostitutes, booze, and other amusements, provide special tutors, and put these bogus "scholar-athletes" in such preposterous courses as "Coaching Principles and Strategies of Basketball," taught by Jim Harrick Jr. (son of Coach Jim Harrick Sr.) at the University of Georgia, whose exams include such questions as: "How many halves are in a college basketball game?" (Incidentally, it doesn't matter at some of these schools if the young scholars miss most of their classes; they get A's anyway!)

Then there are the rapes, other assaults, and assorted criminal activities by scholar-athletes at such Division I schools as Virginia Tech, which seems a particularly rank cesspool of sports corruption. Permeating all this, as Dowling eloquently details, is the money that flows into many bloated Division I athletic departments, wherein media exposure, and the associated bucks, trump all, and coaches are paid ten times professors' wages.

The cosseted scholar-athletes, the rapacious con-men coaches, and Barnum-style athletic directors drag down these institutions to such an extent that serious faculty and students avoid them, or do everything they can to escape them

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when they discover the sleaze wherein they reside.

As Dowling says, after a reference to Ohio State:

> When the only thing that matters at a university is big-time sports, the symbolic center of the institution has shifted profoundly. . . . When the athletes recognize that they are virtual demigods on campus, real students come to regard themselves as marginally important, less real to the life of the school. When every institutional resource is dedicated—and known to be dedicated—to the support and celebration of specialized physical skills, intellectual talent and the pursuit of learning come to be disregarded and displaced, even at many schools, despised.

Of course, even at bad schools individuals can push themselves to get a good education, and serious scholars can pursue their interests, albeit without much praise, and in obscurity. But Dowling is correct to fear this cancer on our culture. Still, and thank God, America has *many* colleges and universities to which real students can flee from the corruption manifest at many Division I schools. The richness of choice is one of the wonders of America.

At one point, Rutgers 1000 recruits the great economist Milton Friedman (Rutgers '32) to write a statement of support, which includes these thoughts:

> Universities exist to transmit knowledge and understanding of ideas and values to students, and to add to the body of intellectual knowledge, not to provide entertainment for spectators or employment for athletes. . . . The proper role of athletic activity at a university is to foster healthy minds and healthy bodies, not to produce spectacles.

Oh yeah? It doesn't take much newspaper reading or TV watching to show that much of the public has quite a different idea, even those citizens who want their own kids to go to Yale. Still, the Republic will survive. When organizations get a reputation for not providing a service—in this case, education—the best students and faculty will take their business elsewhere, and the worst of the institutions will ultimately perish or be reformed. ♦

The Great Lover

The case of Giacomo Casanova, the libertine-librarian.

BY ALGIS VALIUNAS

Everyone knows what the word *Casanova* means—according to taste, and often depending on one's sex, either an enviable ladies' man or a snake-bellied creep—but few are familiar with Giacomo Casanova himself (1725-1798). Casanova's memoir, *Histoire de ma vie*, or *History of My Life*, was not published in its original form until the 1960s, and although the English translation by Willard R. Trask, which was completed in 1971, is generally acknowledged as masterly, the daunting length and considerable cost (six volumes, well over 2,000 pages) surely put off a good many readers.

History of My Life
by Giacomo Casanova
Everyman's Library, 1,512 pp., $35

Casanova's Women
The Great Seducer and the Women He Loved
by Judith Summers
Bloomsbury, 352 pp., $25.95

A new abridgement in this single Everyman's Library volume, which has deftly pared away over half the original, makes Casanova more accessible. And Judith Summers's *Casanova's Women*, which recapitulates several of the more significant entanglements, and provides salient facts where the memoir is sketchy, provides an excellent summary and commentary. So the way is clear for the general reader who wishes to trace this morally slippery term to its source in a particular man's legendary sexual career.

But first, context must be taken into account, for the culture wars over sexual mores were underway long before the 1960s. The 18th century was a veritable erotic battleground, where the forces of virtue conducted a brave rearguard action against a legion of free-thinking rakehells and auxiliary squadrons of respectable gentlemen out for a good time.

Algis Valiunas is a writer in Florida.

Whoredom, Judith Summers tells us, was a thriving industry. In London and Paris, publications such as the *Whoremonger's Guide* and the *Almanack des Adresses des Demoiselles* informed the consumer where to find prostitutes, what they will do for you, and how much they charge. In England, Summers goes on, the Hellfire Club indulged the diabolical sportiveness of bold aristocrats with no fear of damnation; its motto, taken from Rabelais—*Fay ce que voudres*, Do what you please—was carved on the walls of Medmenham Abbey, a Gothic monastery where club members dressed as monks and threw the lewdest orgies in the civilized world.

And there is much that Summers doesn't tell. Lord Chesterfield (1694-1773), in his famous letters advising his illegitimate son on the behavior proper to a gentleman, makes the nice distinction between a rake and "a man of pleasure, [who,] though not always so scrupulous as he should be, and as one day he will wish he had been, refines at least his pleasures by taste, accompanies them with decency, and enjoys them with dignity." In the name of taste, decency, and dignity, Chesterfield suggests the young man, who happened to be courting his future wife at the time, contract sexual liaisons with two Parisian beauties at once, the first for "an attachment," the other for "mere gallantry."

In the epistolary novel *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1761), Jean-Jacques Rousseau teaches aristocrats and bourgeois alike how they ought to live and love. Rousseau's head-over-heels young lovers, Saint Preux and Julie d'Etange,

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sorrowfully renounce each other when her father, a baron, finds the suitor, who possesses all the virtues but noble blood, altogether unfitting. Under the sage tutelage of the middle-aged friend of her father's whom Julie marries (Monsieur de Wolmar), the impetuous hearts get over their lacerating youthful passion, recover their purity, and learn the true ends of an estimable marriage: Lessons in home economics, child-rearing, and the prudent rationing of pleasure furnish sterling moral exemplars for the preservation and perpetuation of what is best in the social order.

The novel sometimes reads like the work of a member of the Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, who happens to have overdeveloped tear ducts, but it is nevertheless an eloquent testimonial to natural sentiment refined by civilized earnestness.

Portrait of Casanova by Raffaello Menges (1767)

KEYSTONE / GETTY IMAGES

Choderlos de Laclos takes the epigraph for his own epistolary novel, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (1782), from Rousseau's preface to *The New Heloise*: "I have observed the manners of my times, and I have published these letters." There is no edifying behavior in Laclos's world, a sexual mire in which the vicious gambol and drown the innocent. The blackguard Vicomte de Valmont is a man who lives in accordance with his nefarious principles, which derive from Machiavelli and underwrite a career of sexual pillage. As one disabused woman writes, "He can calculate to a nicety how many atrocities a man may allow himself to commit, without compromising himself; and, in order to be cruel and mischievous with impunity, he has selected women to be his victims. I will not stop to count all those whom he has seduced: but how many has he not ruined utterly?"

The body count is more closely tallied in Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* (1787). As Giovanni's servant Leporello sings in his catalogue aria, his master has had 640 women in Italy, 231 in Germany, 100 in France, 91 in Turkey, and 1,003 in Spain. Despite his prowess in the bedroom, Giovanni is a fatally slow learner. He invites to dinner the animate memorial statue of the Commendatore, whom he has killed in a brawl and whose daughter he has raped. When the stone guest grips his hand and threatens him with damnation, Giovanni refuses to repent, and is hauled off to hell.

One is hesitant to wish for another's sake that there really *is* a hell, lest one happen to meet the standards for admission oneself, but surely that is a risk worth taking in the case of the Marquis de Sade (1740-1814). The studied inversion of Rousseauan virtue is the Marquis's unclean aim, to be achieved by the defilement and sexual torture of innocents. His books are intended to inflict moral damage on the reader, to infiltrate and corrode normality with nightmare fantasies that will not leave the mind.

And so one comes to Casanova, the most famous, and the most notorious, lover of his, or perhaps any other, time. His very name, depending on whom you ask, has become a synonym for the cavalier gallant or for the sex-addicted hellion. And if you ask someone who has actually read the *History of My Life*, he (maybe even she) will likely tell you that Casanova is both gallant and hellion, a charming rapscallion who loved, after his own fashion, many of the women he slept with, and a heartless reprobate who loved only himself.

Casanova's mother, a beautiful Venetian actress widowed when her son was nine, Summers writes, made it hard for Casanova to love another or himself, leaving him to the care of strangers while she hit the theatrical road. "So they got rid of me," Casanova bitterly recalls, and a lifetime could not efface the pain of this original abandonment. He made a point thereafter of leaving women before they could leave him.

The youth studied for the priesthood, taking a degree in civil and ecclesiastical law at the University of Padua, and becoming an *abate*, a novice priest, in 1741. In the heat of the moment, however, clerical garments came off as readily as a secular pair of trousers, and the odor of sanctity only made it easier to get over on young beauties. Even so, the churchly career did not last long: Casanova joined the Venetian army in 1744, and left that in short order to become a hack violinist with a theater orchestra.

A rare piece of luck changed his life's course. He helped save the life of a Venetian patrician, Matteo Bragadin, who suffered a stroke in his presence, then beguiled the brilliant but credulous man with his professed knowledge of cabbalistic lore and occult practice. Bragadin was so smitten with Casanova that he unofficially adopted him as his son. Wild times ensued. A Grand Tour of Europe fed his innate cosmopolitanism, and some literary work got done: An Italian translation of an opera libretto and a parody of Racine made it to the Dresden stage.

Then, in 1755, someone must have traduced Casanova, for without being told why, he was arrested and confined in the Leads, Venice's hell-hole prison. The ceiling of his cell was so low he could not stand up, and the summer heat and winter cold were torture. No one had ever escaped from the Leads, but Casanova did, after a year-and-

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a-half inside. The account of his getaway is swashbuckling stuff, and the story made him the raconteur of the moment in Paris, where he fled and where he made his fortune by starting up a state lottery.

He undertook to increase that fortune by hoodwinking the preposterously wealthy and alchemically gullible Marquise d'Urfe, whom he promised to reincarnate in a newborn boy. The Marquise bankrolled Casanova's extensive travels, but not even her addled generosity could keep him from winding up poor again. In London, Vienna, and Madrid he fell afoul of the authorities—shady dealings, sexual malfeasance—and had to leave town. Hoping to make a literary splash, he began an Italian translation of the *Iliad* and a history of Poland, but the printer cut both projects short in 1778 when Casanova could not pay his fees. Magazine publishing, a civil service job, and spying for the Inquisition all failed to bring in the cash he needed for his Eurotrash way of life.

A provocative booklet, in which he assaulted the Venetian patriciate and claimed he was the bastard son of a Venetian grandee, got him expelled from Venice forever. He thought about heading off for Madagascar. Instead, he accepted a sinecure as librarian in the castle of a Bohemian count and fellow Freemason. In 1787, on a visit to Prague, he likely met Mozart, and served as Lorenzo Da Ponte's expert consultant on the libretto of *Don Giovanni*.

The Bohemian backwater of Dux did not suit him, but when he got over being suicidal he managed to do a lot of writing. From 1790 to 1797 he worked on his voluminous memoirs, never quite able to finish them. In 1798 a genito-urinary infection, exacerbated by repeated bouts of venereal disease over the years, cut him down. He is said to have declared on his deathbed, "I have lived as a philosopher and die as a Christian."

He had really lived as a sex tourist and had dressed his philosophizing accordingly. The pleasure to be had with women—and young girls and even, on rare occasions, other men—was his animating passion, which amounted to a consuming fever.

The Casanova manuscript, circa 1960

He got over the novice's jitters soon enough. At 15 he ended his virginity in the arms of two sisters, Nanetta and Marta, and their threesome became a regular thing. To the reader, these youngsters' amorous sport is a disturbing blend of innocence and corruption, like a butterscotch sundae dusted with cocaine; but for Casanova it was pure joyous sweetness.

Doing a pair of sisters in the same bed can become addictive, though Summers is reluctant to believe Casanova's tale of another such escapade, with Donna Lucrezia and Donna Angelica. It is true enough, however, that Casanova impregnated Lucrezia in 1744, and that 17 years later he became engaged, quite unwittingly, to his own daughter, Leonilda. The marriage was called off when he met his prospective mother-in-law, but he did wind up in bed with mother and daughter together: There are, after all, things you just don't do and things you just can't pass up. As Casanova writes, "Incestuous relations, the eternal subjects of Greek tragedy, instead of making me weep make me laugh."

Kinks within kinks abound in the memoirs; some of them are amusing, others less so. The opera singer Bellino, whom Casanova met at 19, was apparently a castrato, but Casanova was sure there was, in fact, a beautiful woman disguised here, for he felt deep stirrings of love toward this creature. A comic pursuit followed and nearly ended when Casanova's groping hand discovered a distressingly masculine appendage where he had expected paydirt. Although Bellino was appalled by Casanova—he had procured the services of the singer's two pubescent sisters, and had brutally taken a Greek slave girl while Bellino was watching—she fell in love with him, revealed that her penis was a prosthesis, and so enchanted him that he proposed marriage.

Wedded bliss never came off, for he was poor, and living off her earnings would have been a humiliation. Dreams of making it big overrode true love, suggesting that love might not have been so true after all: "The reflection that now, at the fairest time of my youth, I was about to renounce all hope of the high fortune for which I considered that I was born gave the scales such a push that my reason silenced my heart."

More often it was his groin that silenced his heart. At 28 he seduced with a proposal of marriage the virginal 14-year-old C.C. (Of the roughly 130 women he recorded sleeping with, 22 were not women at all but girls between 11 and 15, and another 29 were between 16 and 20. His tastes were not aberrant, by the standards of the time: The legal age of consent in England was 10.) Her merchant-father would not hear of her marrying an actress's son, and placed her in a convent. When Casanova visited the convent church to get a glimpse of her, another nun, M.M., propositioned him in a letter. Casanova would meet M.M. in an elegant apartment for sexual assignations,

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which M.M.'s *other* lover, the French ambassador to Venice, watched from a secret chamber.

Charm goes a long way, but even Casanova ran short of it in the end. At 38, in London, he fell for the 16-year-old La Charpillon, who came from an illustrious line of whores: "It was on that fatal day at the beginning of September 1763 that I began to die and ceased to live."

Balked longing ravaged him. He was learning the sexual humiliation that comes with age. La Charpillon confounded him at every turn. She teased him, took his money, and turned her back. He caught her making love with her hairdresser. When he finally got her into bed, she still refused him. The caressing lover turned rampaging brute: He beat her mercilessly, put a knife to her throat, tried to rape her. Soon, Casanova approached the verge of suicide, and only a chance encounter with a cheering acquaintance saved him.

The end comes hard for the man who has always relied on the charms of youth to win the pleasures of young flesh—"cultivating whatever gave pleasure to my senses was always the chief business of my life; I have never found any occupation more important"—and the sexually unexciting life is not worth living, by Casanova's lights. The problem is that once sexual pleasures are hard to come by, life becomes unendurably barren. Thirty-eight is terribly young to begin to die.

How are we to judge Casanova? To imagine the response of the literary figures of his own century might be a way in. Lord Chesterfield would think him a rake and an upstart with no hope of being taken for a gentleman. Rousseau would find him a sinister rogue who embodied the worst of vain social ambition and sexual license. Choderlos de Laclos would concur—and though his Valmont would appreciate Casanova's energy and address, he would find him wanting in blackness of soul. Don Giovanni would recognize himself in Casanova, but in diminished form. And the Marquis de Sade would deem him rather too much of a sentimentalist, who said his own pleasure derived largely from the pleasure he gave, when in fact the richest pleasures come from the pain one inflicts.

To the virtuous, then, Casanova was a scoundrel; to the villainous, he was insufficiently evil to be really interesting. For all his talent and winsomeness, Casanova was a moral mediocrity, whose vitality ran out when his looks were gone, and whose relentless pleasure-seeking ended in despondency. One has to assume that he is now a member of the Hellfire Club in perpetuity, but one can also imagine him in the circle of the contemptible and disgusting rather than among the more malign. His memoirs are the dismal record of wasted gifts and misdirected energies.

No serious man will envy Casanova's life, and women will only shudder. ♦

Tar Heel Statesman

The Constitution did well by Sam Ervin, and vice versa. **BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.**

My native state of North Carolina has too seldom given a good account of itself in national politics. But with the 1954 appointment of a little-known jurist to the unexpired Senate term of Clyde R. Hoey, it hit the jackpot. Like Shakespeare's Cleopatra, Sam J. Ervin Jr. was a figure of infinite variety, seldom stale, as amusing as serious, as scholarly as witty.

As a former state Supreme Court justice, Ervin was immediately recruited for the Senate's belated and timid crackdown on its rogue demagogue, Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. He soon became the Watkins select committee's floor spokesman and star quarterback in the censure showdown, and the result for McCarthy was fatal. As a professor of mine remarked at the time, "Joe was finished when Sam hung those Tar Heel mountain stories on him." It gives me satisfaction to report, moreover, that my first and only participation in a public demonstration was in a "Joe must go" rally in Chapel Hill, where I was then a sophomore. I marched in Ervin's support with a small throng down Franklin Street. I can't remember whether I carried a sign, but I did join the chant.

Senator Sam Ervin, Last of the Founding Fathers
by Karl Campbell
UNC, 401 pp., $34.95

This was the first act in a quarter-century political show that made me a Sam Ervin addict. The McCarthy censure work bracketed at one end a Senate career that ended with nice symmetry two decades later in his chairmanship of the Watergate committee. Few Americans who were alive and alert in 1973 can have forgotten the stranger-than-fiction phantasmagoria that was the beginning of the end of Richard Nixon's presidency. Throughout his two Senate decades, Ervin was an enigma to many who heard the words but not the music. Wasn't this constitutional purist, who fretted over personal privacy and esoteric separation-of-powers issues, also among the obstructive foes of all civil rights bills and most measures of social reform? What sense could the usual stereotypes make of that?

To a significant degree, the imagined puzzle lay not in the man or his views but in the shopworn media mindsets with which we struggle to confront political nonconformity.

Edwin M. Yoder Jr., an editor and columnist in North Carolina and Washington for almost half-a-century, is the author, most recently, of a novel, Lions at Lamb House, *about Sigmund Freud and Henry James.*

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Last day of the Watergate committee, July 12, 1974

BETTMANN / CORBIS

In truth, Sam Ervin was a revenant from vanished ages of American statecraft, when the Constitution mattered more and stereotypes less. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. once suggested that Ervin was a "tertium quid" redux, resembling those mavericks of the Federal period who consented to no party collar. Karl Campbell ventures a homelier analogy, "the last of the Founding Fathers," a label he traces to the columnist James J. Kilpatrick.

One imagines that the senator, who retired soon after the Watergate hearings that made him an icon and who died (at age 88) in 1985, would chuckle at the conceit and deflect the honor with a mountain story. But he probably also would be pleased. He approached constitutional issues with a literalism and zeal whose closest analogue is the more literate varieties of Biblical fundamentalism. He was an "originalist" before originalism was cool, and that explained his often fierce reaction to judge-made law: for instance, Supreme Court decisions such as *Miranda* and *Mallory* that expanded the procedural rights of accused criminals.

On the other hand, he supported as militantly those personal liberties explicitly guaranteed by the Bill of Rights: strict separation of church and state, due process, speedy trial, reasonable bailment, and the like. That creed made him a dogged foe of the Nixon administration's experiments with personal liberty in the District of Columbia, such as the "preventive detention" of accused criminals. One day in a subcommittee hearing on the District crime bill, he admonished Attorney General John Mitchell, Nixon's advance man, that it was hard enough to establish what happened in the past, let alone to predict the future.

If one grasped this essential distinction between the provisions of the Bill of Rights, and their occasionally fanciful expansion by judges, it was rarely difficult to guess where Ervin would come down. His closest look-alike in these matters was Justice Hugo Black, who in his latter years on the Supreme Court carried a tattered copy of the Constitution in his pocket and issued such delphic pronouncements as "no law [in the First Amendment's prefatory clause] means *no law*."

When in the spring of 1973 Ervin was enlisted as chairman of the Senate select committee on presidential campaign practices, soon universally known as the Watergate committee, Nixon's White House henchmen breathed a sigh of relief. They thought they were up against a blowhard partisan fuddy-duddy. They were wrong in all respects. Ervin was not a partisan figure, but we know now that he didn't buy the White House line that Nixon himself was uninvolved in the criminal follies. "It has been my experience," Ervin observed privately, "that the madam of a whorehouse is very seldom a virgin."

John Ehrlichman, the powerful and cocky White House counselor, felt the edge of Ervin's wit when he challenged the senator one day over "inherent" presidential powers. "How do you know that, Mr. Chairman?" Ehrlichman demanded, aggressively jutting his chin. "Because," came the response, "I can understand the English language. It is my mother tongue." There was a moment of stunned silence in the Senate caucus room, then an uproar of laughter and applause. It was high political theater, and a transformative moment.

Professor Campbell argues, correctly I believe, that Ervin's labors as chairman of two important Senate subcommittees—on constitutional rights and on the separation of powers—were a rehearsal for the Watergate moment. Issues of executive overreach had festered and Ervin's hearings on personal privacy (notably the Army's irregular surveillance of private citizens) and the dodgy use of impoundment as an ideological weapon became the groundwork for a significant counterattack.

That counterforce has faltered, of late, for want of any legislator of comparable stature and learning to sustain it. In any case, the executive excesses of the 1960s and '70s set the stage for a whiggish reaction, and Sam Ervin was nothing if not a small-w whig, a determined apostle of legislative supremacy. Someone called him "solicitor general for the legislative branch." He was that, exactly.

What was too little appreciated in his hour of fame was that Ervin's libertarianism had a long, colorful history. As a young state legislator in 1925 he had played a key role in sparing North Carolina the embarrassment of an anti-evolution "monkey law." His comment on the Poole Bill (as the Tar Heel variant was called) was that it "absolved the monkeys" of responsibility for human mischief.

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As an observer of the Sam Ervin saga from the perspective of North Carolina newspaper offices over almost two decades, I learned that when one differed with him (for instance, over civil rights bills), his views, however retrograde in appearance, were never mean, capricious, or irrational. If you objected to them you could count on a friendly, measured letter to the editor in response.

Sam Ervin, Last of the Founding Fathers is a scholarly and readable book, and a plausible reading of this protean, colorful, and monumental figure. But a significant flaw must be noted. The author has adopted the theory that, as an exemplar of North Carolina civility, Sam Ervin was erecting a façade, prompted less by conviction than by the urge to preserve the state's reputation for moderacy.

There is something in this, as in all academic theories. But at bottom the theory is patronizing and misleading. It trivializes the give-and-take of political conflict as, in essence, an exercise in the higher public relations. The theory becomes a leitmotif in this book, constantly reiterated; and the footnotes confirm that the author has contracted this condescending illusion from a celebrated book by Prof. William Chafe about the Greensboro response to the challenges of the civil rights era: *Civility and Civil Rights.* Chafe is an able and diligent historian, but this now-canonical interpretation of the Greensboro example (and inferences from it regarding North Carolina as a whole) misconceives a civic ethos, and consequently that of Sam Ervin Jr. himself.

Whatever one thought of his causes, he played the great game of politics earnestly, and for keeps. ♦

Seeing Is Believing

The drama behind the scenes at the Metropolitan Opera. **BY HEATHER MAC DONALD**

If you've ever wanted to be backstage during an opera, now's your chance.

The Metropolitan Opera has begun beaming selected performances live into movie theaters around the world—and those broadcasts show not just the events on stage, but the behind-the-scenes support as well. Even if you attend the Met regularly, these movie screenings are not to be missed for the glimpse they provide of the high-wire act of opera production. That the backstage operations caught on camera are occurring live, as you watch, makes the experience all the more gripping.

Met patrons waiting in the actual house for the overture of Verdi's *Macbeth* in January certainly had a sublime aesthetic journey ahead of them, one that no movie theater, no matter how excellent its sound system, can replicate. But holders of $22 movie seats saw something that not even occupants of $220 orchestra spots were privy to: conductor James Levine making his way up from the bowels of the facility to the podium just minutes before the performance began—only to be accosted by General Manager Peter Gelb and asked for his views of the opera.

As the seconds clicked down to curtain time, Levine goodnaturedly responded to the question whether Verdi had improved upon Shakespeare—"Being a musician, I tend to think so"—and assessed the challenges of this lesser-known opera: "For the two protagonists, it's very difficult. As for me, it's a difficult piece, but exhilarating."

Levine even provided a brief overview of the evolution of Verdi's musical style from early works such as *Macbeth* to later operas which broke with "the old Italian style of long lines." Then, expressing what many a movie patron, acutely aware of the clock, must have felt, Levine added cheerfully: "But we don't have time to discuss this." Gelb got in one more query directed precisely to this countdown pressure: "It's amazing that you can talk to me." Don't count on this in the future, Levine, in essence, responded: "If this were *Tristan und Isolde*, which I am conducting in March, I wouldn't be here. I would be in my dressing room meditating." The camera then followed Levine on the final stretch to the orchestra pit.

Once the music begins, the movie broadcasts settle into the more familiar conventions of televised opera and symphony concerts, including acute close-ups of individual orchestra members concentrating intently on the score during the overture—a shot that has outlived its usefulness—and both focused and sweeping coverage of the stage. The sound quality in the Irvine, California theater, where I saw the *Macbeth* and *Hansel and Gretel* performances, was superb. The Met's camera work, directed from a trailer stationed outside the house, was often striking in its perspective and mobility; in *Macbeth*, for example, the camera swooped in from underneath the witches gathered on the heath, who were tricked out in this updated production as batty bag ladies wielding large handbags and sporting 1950s-style pillbox hats and wing-tip glasses.

The close-ups of the soloists belied Peter Gelb's self-promotion as the impresario who will finally bring "theatrical values" to the Met. The Met's artists are already acting quite persuasively, thank you—as John Relyea's tense foreboding as Banquo, and Maria Guleghina's sensuous exultation in power as Lady Macbeth, demonstrated. The camera also captures unfortunate directorial impositions that the audience in the hall itself might miss. How many occupants of the second balcony in *Hansel and Gretel* noticed that Gretel smears a Hitleresque moustache on

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Renée Fleming interviews Plácido Domingo backstage

Hansel after the children dispatch the witch to the oven, a gesture that suddenly makes perverse sense of the grey cinderblock walls, exposed gas pipes, and intermittent glaring white light of the witch's prison-like kitchen? That Humperdinck's lush score and story have absolutely nothing to do with the Holocaust is, of course, irrelevant to a Regietheater director like Richard Jones.

But however much the fancy camera work illuminates the stage action, it is the backstage perspective that, for the moment, is the real added value of the Met's movie series—at least for people with access to the Met itself. Your pulse quickens as you observe Željko Lucic (Macbeth) alone in the wings playing with his cufflinks before the curtain rises on Act II of *Macbeth*, while the stage manager says, "Oh, crap. C'mon, c'mon, c'mon!"

Whoever it was who was supposed to "c'mon" apparently did so, for the next thing you hear is: "Get the camera off. Ten seconds to go. Houselights off! Cuing the maestro." Undoubtedly, these little moments of suspense accompany every performance; but if you're not used to them, they are rather hair-raising.

Some of the most haunting images of the performances were not created by the director and were not visible from the hall itself. Moviegoers at *Macbeth* saw an unknown female figure sitting somewhere in near darkness with just a single shaft of light on her, a picture of overwhelming solitude and vulnerability. Not until the scene begins do we realize that we have been observing Maria Guleghina on the Met's huge stage in the moments before the curtain rises on her sleepwalking scene. For an instant you can almost imagine what it is like to be alone in that gargantuan space about to face 4,000 spectators expecting you to carry flawlessly to the highest reaches of the house.

Soprano Renée Fleming has been catching singers as they leave the stage between acts, and asking them to talk about the opera (sometimes a Met staffer conducts the interview). Like the pre-performance chat with James Levine, these real-time conversations create a certain tension in the moviegoer: Shouldn't the singers be allowed to retreat to their dressing room to rest up for their next hurdles? But the stars appear surprisingly relaxed and willing to discuss their character and the challenges of the role, notwithstanding that a stagehand has just had to mop the sweat off their brow from the previous act's exertions.

These X-rays of performances are not without cost. They break the illusion of the stagecraft and create a Janus-like experience of back-to-back fiction and technical reality. The surreal man-trees in the forest of *Hansel and Gretel* walk into the wings and remove the branches that sprout out of their big jackets in place of heads. The silent bulbous cooks wait among hanging power cables and electrical panels before gliding onstage with the banquet that director Richard Jones substitutes for *Hansel and Gretel*'s traditional angel dream pantomime. Conceivably, after hearing the stage manager cue the company a few more times, the movie-house viewer will yearn for a pure frontal experience of opera again, without seams and armature.

For now, however, the Met's breakthrough venture into movie production has expanded not just its audience but the experience of opera as well. And audiences are eating it up. There was hardly a seat to be had at the Irvine broadcasts in January. A patron who has been attending the shows since last year predicted that the line for *La Bohème* in April would begin forming three hours before the show began.

Even more hopeful for the future of opera, the Met's new initiative has inspired competitors. Covent Garden and the San Francisco Opera plan to start releasing their productions in movie theaters; La Scala already has done so. Asked to comment on these competing projects, some of which promise even better sound and visual quality than the Met's High Definition technology, Peter Gelb replied that the Met broadcasts would remain superior because they alone would be live.

Before I attended a Met screening, I had assumed that Gelb was simply differentiating his product on whatever ground was available. But having watched a live Met performance from 3,000 miles away, I see his point. All the better for us all: The other entrants to this operatic movie venture will presumably strive to develop their own engaging features to beat the competition. ♦

KEN HOWARD / METROPOLITAN OPERA

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The Way We Were

New Hollywood and the new critics. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

These are hard times for professional movie critics. The job has gotten far more difficult in the past 15 years, because vastly more movies are being made and released—for example, 150 films received a theatrical release in New York City in 1985, whereas last year there were more than 400. At the same time, newspapers across the country are ridding themselves of in-house critics as a cost-cutting measure and using cheap stringers or wire service copy instead. But perhaps even more sobering, movies just don't seem to *matter* as much.

Pictures at a Revolution
Five Movies and the Birth of the New Hollywood
by Mark Harris
Penguin Press, 496 pp., $27.95

The average working movie critic came of age in the 1960s and 1970s, when film seemed to be the most urgent of art forms. Mark Harris has just written a juicy book called *Pictures at a Revolution* about the precise moment when the old Hollywood dream machine gave way to the young directors, producers, and writers who wanted to make provocative and challenging films rather than glossy studio pablum—which happened to be the same moment that the new breed of movie critics took over from the fuddy-duddies who sniffed at the medium's radical possibilities.

Pictures at a Revolution chronicles the making of the five Oscar-nominated films of 1967. One of them was entirely negligible—the elephantine musical version of *Doctor Dolittle*, which nobody on earth liked but for which the employees of 20th Century Fox dutifully voted on their Academy Award ballots. The other four nominees were far more interesting. Two of them reflected Hollywood's growing outspokenness on race, with Sidney Poitier the pivotal figure. In *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, Poitier was saintly and without blemish as a Harvard-educated doctor engaged to marry the white daughter of a liberal San Francisco family. *In the Heat of the Night* featured Poitier as a tough Philadelphia police detective who ends up investigating a murder in a Mississippi town—and who, in one of the great fantasy-fulfillment moments in all of American cinema, answers a demeaning slap across the face from a racist businessman with a slap right back.

In the Heat of the Night would take the Oscar that year, in what was perhaps the first Academy Award balloting in which liberal self-congratulation played a notable role. But it was the final two nominees—*The Graduate* and *Bonnie and Clyde*—that really marked the transition from the old to the new.

The Graduate offered a remarkable example of how quickly an American movie could become the stuff of legend. Its humor was deadpan, its tone cool, its protagonist depressed. And yet from the moment moviegoers cast eyes on it, *The Graduate* became a dominating subject in the American cultural conversation. The kicker of a sketch-comedy moment near the film's beginning—"plastics"—became one of the most famous punchlines in movie history.

What was particularly significant about *The Graduate* was the sense that director Mike Nichols and screenwriter Buck Henry had caught lightning in a bottle by capturing their audience's mood of disgruntled alienation. The movie was the perfect expression of the youth worship that typified the 1960s, with its soulless and corrupt middle-aged bourgeois offering nothing but spiritual death to their soulful and pure kids. Based on a far less interesting novel of the same name, *The Graduate* was a demonstration of how movies had supplanted novels when it came to offering young cultural consumers a taste of The Way We Live Now.

Bonnie and Clyde proved to be the most influential of the five films, since it was the first mainstream movie with graphic depictions of violence—and since it offered a portrait of the United States in which the authorities were more bloodthirsty and psychotic than the criminals. The leading movie critic for the three decades preceding its release was Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times*. He hated *Bonnie and Clyde* for what he thought was its nihilism and ugliness, and wrote several pieces denouncing it. As Harris recounts, *Bonnie and Clyde* was slow to catch on, in part because of Crowther's attacks, but catch on it did. The result was that its star and producer, Warren Beatty, became the King of New Hollywood, and Bosley Crowther was cashiered by the *New York Times*.

Crowther's place as the dean of American film criticism was soon filled by Pauline Kael, who was hired that same year by the *New Yorker* in part because of an essay she had published in the *New Republic* in praise of *Bonnie and Clyde*. It was Kael who made the most compelling case for the movies as the premier cultural message board—not because they followed in the formal footsteps of plays or novels or paintings, and not because they had a unified author and a unified vision, but because they were exciting and vivid and fresh and entirely new.

Kael was the inspiration for the critics who find themselves on the chopping block today. It is not their fault that the medium's moment of primacy has long since passed, supplanted in the public imagination by long-form television like *The Sopranos* and *The Wire*. Watch *The Graduate* today and, if you're like me, you want Sidney Poitier to come out of the pool and slap Dustin Hoffman across the face for being such an ungrateful, petulant white boy. So much for the way we lived, circa 1967. ♦

John Podhoretz, editorial director of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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Parody

ProPublica, a nonprofit newsroom that plans to launch online this spring . . . is in the process of hiring 25 journalists . . . to do what [editor Paul Steiger] calls "the deep-dive stuff." Much of its $10 million annual budget has been donated by Herbert and Marion Sandler . . . [who] have given hundreds of thousands of dollars to Democratic party campaigns. Its advisory board includes* New York Times *managing editor Jill Abramson,* Boston Globe *editor Martin Baron,* Denver Post *editor Gregory Moore,* Seattle Times *editor David Boardman, and Cynthia Tucker, editorial page editor of the* Atlanta Journal-Constitution. *Others include* U.S. News & World Report *editor at large David Gergen, former* Los Angeles Times *editor John Carroll,* Fortune *columnist Allan Sloan and historian Robert Caro.

—Howard Kurtz,* The Washington Post *(February 11)

Paul:
Here's our working story list—
hard-hitting stuff, unlike those bipartisan
wimps at the New York Times.
—DSS

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